

## Distribution Pattern of Pyu Style Stupas in Ancient Bagan

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### Abstract

Bagan has archaeological monuments nearly 4000 buildings. Among them some of the monuments are asserted to be those of Pre-Bagan period, termed as Pyu type monuments. These buildings are nearly all identified by stupa with countable numbers of nearly two dozen monuments. In the distribution pattern, of Pyu type stupas were existed along the bank of Ayeyarwady River in Bagan area. Especially, all Pyu type stupas have not been found in the inland areas of Bagan region such as Minnanthu and Hpwa-Saw Area, but these were mostly found along the bank of the river such as, Myinkabar, Thiripyitsayar and Old Bagan area. Thus, it reflects the potential distribution or settlement pattern of Pyu before Bagan period or early Bagan Period in this area. So, this paper has attempted to message Pyu people were more look like to live nears the rivers and streams. The aim of this paper is one of the important features to trace the distribution or settlement pattern of Pyu people in Pre-Bagan Period or Early Bagan Period. The outcome of this paper is to discover about some of the distribution or settlement pattern of ancient people of Pyu culture. This paper approached the field working and the study on Art and Architecture of Pyu style stupas in ancient Bagan Area.

**Key Words:** Pre-Bagan period, Pyu type stupas, Myinkabar, Thiripyitsayar

### Introduction

Bagan was the earliest imperial state of Myanmar. They left so many religious monuments through the centuries. Especially in Bagan, there are traditionally cultural heritages of old ancient monuments which occupy along the east bank of the Ayeyarwady River in central Myanmar. In fact, the structural remains of Bagan can be seen in two main types, viz religious buildings and secular buildings, the former in majority numbers. These can be classified into stupas, temples, monasteries, caves, ordination halls (Theim) and libraries (Pitaka Tike).

In the archaeological evidences in Myanmar, Pyu style of solid stupas has been still existence at Sriksetra. But these are limited information about the detail architectural styles in type and size of them because of two main reasons. The first one is their lesser numbers in survival, and the second their present features with not original shape as a result of renovation and other reconstruction works through the successive periods. But some traceable remains of the structures with their character to Pyu style stupas can be discernibly found in those of the ancient monuments from Bagan. In paper attempt to describe are totally 23 stupas in identifiable characters with Pyu style features in Bagan, among them all of the Pyu style Stupa in Bagan.

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Remarkably, these Pyu style stupas have taken their outcome from the certain distributed areas close to the Ayeyarwady River, but not found the interior areas of Bagan region. It is one of the important features to trace the distribution or settlement pattern of Pyu people in Pre-Bagan Period or Early Bagan Period. So, this paper has made attempt to throw light on the distribution pattern of Pyu Style Stupas in ancient Bagan.

### **Pyu Style Stupas in Archaeological Evidences of Bagan**

Pyu people belonged to a Tibeto-Burmese tribe, they entered migrating early from Tibet plateau. According to literature, Pyu people were literate people. Record of two Chinese travellers, Sriksetra is a Buddhism flourished country in 7<sup>th</sup> century CE. The basic economy of Pyu people is agriculture. Early urban society of Pyu people built Beikthano, Halin, Sriksetra at CE 1<sup>st</sup> -mid 9<sup>th</sup> century CE. Pyu people splendidly built their cities, based on these facts, assumed that Pyu people were skillful at crafts. Pyu people were Buddhists. In CE 832, Nan Chao attacked to Pyu Cities and then, their country fell in 9<sup>th</sup> century CE. As a result, Pyu, Thet, Mon, Palon and Wa tribes and later Tibet-Myanmar tribes established a new society in central Myanmar then the fallen of their cities. Their contributed country is known as Bagan just now.

Bagan exist in central Myanmar along the east bank of the Ayeyarwady River. In Bagan, archaeological monuments are nearly 4000 buildings. The buildings in Bagan can be classified into 8 categories; they are (1) stupas (2) Temples (3) Monasteries (4) Theims, Sīmā or ordination halls (5) Tipitaka (or) libraries (6) Palace (7) Rock-cut caves (8) Image house. Practically, the architectural history of Myanmar begins with the foundation of Bagan in the middle of the 9<sup>th</sup> century CE. The technical skill and artistic excellence of the Bagan period craftsmen are best seen in the construction of the stupas and temples. The stupa artists of the Bagan period were renowned for their crafts. Fortunately, some of the best-known examples can still be seen in Bagan nowadays. Among them stupa and temple formed the largest number of religious monuments in Myanmar, and stupa is a typical example of the local version of an Indian origin. In the typological study, the stupa in India and ceylon (srilanka) was essentially a reliquary built in the form of a hemispherical dome suggestive of a sacred burial mound. The style of these stupas belongs to the general form of an immense bell in combination of simplicity and massiveness, in terms of volumes in harmonious arrangement. In Bagan, the city and its environs are covered with thousands of splendid monuments of every shape and size, some of the buildings have been composed of the inner walls most of them are decorated with beautiful fresco. (Sein Maung Oo, 1993, pp. 163-209) The remains of over 4000 religious edifices including stupas made chiefly of brick scatter over the ancient city of Bagan and its environs. The stupas were distributed in which Bagan environs, such as, around the Thiripyitsaya village, Myinkabar village and old Bagan precinct. Pyu style stupas can be seen along the bank of the Ayeyarwady River. Pyu style stupas

at Bagan are Ngakywenadaung, Bu Paya, encased stupa of kyaukmyatmaw, Inn Paya, Myinkabar stupa, Scovell's Pawdawmu Stupa and so on. Ngakywenadaung stupa is termed by the scholars as "bulbous type", it is likely that this evolutionary development took place between Sriksetra and Bagan period of around 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> century CE. Since, only a miniature model was found in Sriksetra and actual stupa was built in Bagan.

The meaning of ceti comes from relics of the Buddha. It is derived from the term Cita which is speaking the term Caitya (Sanskrit) and Cetiya (Pali). It is a solid pagoda as a repository of some elements sacred to the Buddhists. Originally, this repository took the form of a mound. This mound in Sanskrit was called stupa (Thūpa). Pagodas or Stupas are solid structures that enshrine a sacred relic or particularly potent image of the Buddha. By the time that Buddhism had reached Bagan, the stupa had developed. Bagan's area contained the crumbled fragments of stupa and earliest Buddhist dedications at Bagan dating from the 9<sup>th</sup> century were stupas based on the bulbous Pyu style. (Paul Strachan,1989, pp. 14-15) During the reign of King Anawrahta, the arts and especially architecture began to flourish. He built temples, stupas, monasteries, dams, libraries etc. Among them Ngakywenadaung and Bupaya are said to belong to Pre- Anawrahta period.

### **Pyu Type Stupas distributed in Bagan**

In Bagan, vast remains of ancient monuments include temples and stupas in Buddhist architectural work. Among them, stupas take second large numbers. These stupas can be identified by chronological order of Early, Middle, and Late Period styles of Bagan Period. But some of the stupas have shown in their characteristic features of Proto Bagan work, termed as Pyu Style Stupas. Some scholars assumed that there are totally 23 stupas of Pyu style in Bagan, and they are distributed in three different areas such as:

- (1) Thiripyitsaya Area
- (2) Myinkaba Area
- (3) Old Bagan Area

#### **(1) Pyu Style Stupas around Thiripyitsaya Area**

In Thiripyitsaya area, there are four Pyu style stupas such as Lawkananda Ceti, and Htupayon Leysutan Stupas, Monument (No.1037/426), Monument (No.1059/441). (See Map. 1)

##### **(a) Lawkananda Ceti (Monument No.1023/418 a)**

Lawkananda ceti is situated in the southwest of Bagan City and south of Thiripyitsayar village, was built by King Anawrahta during his reign in 1059 CE. The pagoda is erected on the east bank of Ayeyarwady river. Lawkananda would be the first to see upper bank is bell-shape dome. This Pagoda has three receding octagonal terraces, is included a large stupa, it has accessible

octagonal terrace with stairway on north. Architectural styles of lawkananda ceti is a representative of the middle or transitional period. The two lower terraces are ascended by flights of step on four sides. It has stucco carving and mouldings. The bell-shape dome, much more elongated than that of the later pagodas, rises above the terraces and conical finial (See Fig. 1). Lawkananda pagoda has four stairways. The three terraces are still in octagonal form, which is the earlier style of Pyu and Myanmar. Thus, the Lawkananda ceti, when compared with the Bupaya and Myinkabar ceti is certainly a further stage in the architectural evolution of the middle phase as evidenced by the elaborated designed terraces, embellishments on the body and mouldings of the spire. (Kyaw lat, 2010, p. 121)

**(b) Htupayon Leysutan Stupas (Monument No.1038/427, 1039/428, 1040/429,1041/430)**

These stupas lie on the north of Thiripyitsayar, on the east bank of Ayeyarwady river. Htupayon Leysutan stupas is a small stupa, it has a circular terrace and the upper portion is a circular bulbous dome and conical spire. It was built by *circa* 12<sup>th</sup> century CE and was found traces of stucco mouldings. These four stupas are similarly shape and architectural style. The southern stupas were the biggest in all of the four stupas. (See Fig. 2)

**(c) Monument (No.1037/426)**

This stupa is a encased stupa, situated on the north of Thiripyitsayar. It has a square base, circular bell-shaped dome and conical spire. This stupa is a small stupa, with a smaller and older stupa encased. It was built by about 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> century. During the excavation of the stupa were found inscribed votive tablets and bronze image of Buddha.

**(d) Monument (No.1059/441)**

This stupa is a small stupa, with a smaller and older stupa encased. It has a square base and circular bell shape dome. It was built in about 11<sup>th</sup> century, votive tablets inscribed with Anawrahta's name and earthen vessel were found in relic chamber of this stupa.

**(2) Pyu Style Stupas Around the Myinkabar Area**

In Myinkabar area, Pyu style stupa are of six stupas, such as Kyaukmyatmaw (No.1158/503a), Monument (No.1225/561), Monument (No.1157/502), Monument (No.1155/500), Myinkabar ceti (No.1328/652), and Paung Ku Paya (No.1339/662).(See Map.2)

**(a)Kyaukmyatmaw Ceti (No.1158/503a)**

The typical encased stupas of Kyaukmyatmaw Ceti are located south of Myinkabar. The former one is a medium sized stupa with a smaller and older stupa encased. Outer plan is octagonal base and inner stupa is constructed with the form of circular bell-shaped dome and conical spire. This stupa was built in early 12th century CE. The size was medium. Then basement of bell-shaped was built and was assumed the early type of Ceti. It is situated on the east bank of the Ayeyarwady river at nearly Myinkabar Village. In fact, the encasement of the stupa started the

repositories of the sacred relics began to be encased with massive structures. The former is a medium sized stupa with a smaller and older stupa encased (See Fig. 3).

**(b) Monument (No.1225/561)**

This stupa is located in the south of Myinkabar nearly Manuha Pagoda. Now, it shows temple type, but this stupa is an encased stupa with a small stupa according to Pichard, Monument Inventory. It was built by during *circa*. 13<sup>th</sup> century.

**(c) Monument (No.1157/502)**

Monuments No.1157/502 is a medium sized stupa, it has an octagonal base terraces and cylindrical dome shape stupa. This stupa is located south of Myinkabar village nearly Kyaukmyatmaw encased stupa, was built in about 12<sup>th</sup> century.

**(d) Monument (No.1155/500)**

This stupa is a type of encased stupa, south of Myinkabar nearly Kyaukmyatmaw ceti. It is a small stupa building with a smaller and older stupa encased. The upper part of these stupa is a circular bell shape dome encased stupa and conical spire. This stupa is situated on the east bank of Ayeyarwady River.

**(e) Myinkabar Stupa (No.1328/652)**

Myinkabar Stupa is one of the fewer stupas in Bagan area and sited on the north bank of Myinkabar creek, just to the east of the road and to the south of Gubyaukgyi in Myinkabar Village. The stupa slightly change in style form Bawbawgyi, was the Myinkabar stupa (No-1328). Three circular terraces had changed to octagonal shape single terrace. The prototype stupa of Kyaukmyatmaw and Myinkabar stupa built in early Bagan period. Kyaukmyatmaw and Myinkabar Ceti is a Pyu style stupa in Bagan dated back from about early Bagan period. The Myinkabar Stupa is a simple form, with a dome and a finial which foreshadow Anawrahta's later work (See Fig. 4).

**(f) Pongku Paya (No.1339/662)**

Pongku Paya is situated on the Ayeyarwady river bank in the Myinkabar village. It was probably built in early Bagan period and found some brick with marking. Paungku Paya was built by Anawrahta during his reign in 11<sup>th</sup> century. It looks like to a series of terraces in the basements of the stupa and bell-shape. It has stucco carving and moulding. It is now only a mound and half of this mound is ruined by erosion of the Ayeyarwady river.

**(3) Pyu Style Stupa near Old Bagan Area**

In Old Bagan Area, Pyu style stupa are of thirteen stupas, such as Paukpinya (1614/922), Byaing Paya (1608/916), Hput Paya (1609/917), Hpa Paya (1610/918), Ngakywenadaung (1603/911), Inn Paya (722/366), Scovell's Pawdawmu (1690/922), Monument (No.1863/1160), Shwesandaw

(No.1536/849), Monument (No.280/190b), Monument (No.1456/769), Bupaya (No.1657/961) and Monument (No.2014/1310) so on (See Map. 3).

**(a) Paukpinya(1614/922), (b) Byaing Paya(1608/916), (c) HputPaya(1609/917), (d)Hpa Paya (1610/918), (e) Ngakywenadaung (1603/911)**

These stupas are located in the precinct of the old Bagan area near Bagan Archaeological Museum. One of the good examples in Bagan Stupas is the glazed stupa of Ngakywenadaung. This stupa is situated in the south-west of Tandawkyia, near the Pahtothamyar temple and 44 feet measured by height. It was built by the King of Taungthugyi within CE 931-946, assumed early Pyu style of pagoda. These stupa is termed by the scholars as a bulbous dome shape on a tapering circular base, it is likely that this evolutionary development took place between Sriksetra and Bagan period of around 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> century, since only a miniature model was found in Sriksetra and actual stupa was built in Bagan. All of these Stupas such as Paukpinya, Byaing Paya, Hput Paya, Hpa Paya are of a small stupas, it has a circular base and circular terrace, some of the buildings are bell shaped domes and conical spires. Some scholars assumed that these buildings were built in about 12<sup>th</sup> century (See Fig. 6, Fig. 7, Fig. 8 and Fig. 10).

**(f) Inn Paya (722/366)**

This Paya is a type of stupa and found in bell-shaped. Like the stupa types, decorated and built on it and can be seen glaze plaques. Earliest types of stupa designs assumed like Bawbaw-Gyi stupa in Sriksetra.

**(g) Scovell's Pawdawmu(1690/922)**

One of the prominent encased stupas in Bagan period is Scovell's Pawdawmu located of Southeast Old Bagan. It is a small Stupa formerly encased in a large one which was exposed since 1918, when Scovell dismantled the encasing stupa. By the analytical study of the encased stupa in Bagan period, they were partly exposed show architectural changing and development of stupas in that period.

**(h)Monument(No.1863/1160),(i)Shwesandaw(No.1536/849),(j)Monument(No.280/190b),(k)Monument (No.1456/769)**

Monument No.1863 is a small stupa near east of Min Oo Chan ta Ceti and it has a hemispherical dome shape structure, it was built in about 13<sup>th</sup> century. Shwesandaw ceti is situated to the south of Ananda temple. It is contributed to be firstly built by King Anawrahta after his conquest of Thaton in 1057 CE. It is said that some sacred hairs of Gautama Buddha, which were obtained from the Mon country, were enshrined in it. The pagoda has five terraces with high manner and decorated with corner stupas. There are five square terraces which testify to the highest basement in stupa architecture at Bagan. After conquering the Mon Kingdom of Thaton, Anawrahta took many Mon architects and masonry workers to Bagan. And then, they created a new style with the combination of Mon and Pyu architectural styles. Monument No.280 is a small

stupa building, is situated on the west bank of Shwe Chaung. It was built as a smaller and older stupa encased in about 11<sup>th</sup> or 14<sup>th</sup> century. In this stupa, bricks with inscribed Pyu characters and finger mark were found. Monument No.1456 is situated south of Old Bagan, northeast of Mingalar Ceti. This stupa is included encased stupa and small stupa. It has a circular bell-shaped dome and conical spire, was built in about 13<sup>th</sup> century.

**(l) Bupaya (No.1657/961) and (m) Monument (No.2014/1310)**

The Bupaya is situated along the bank of the Ayeyarwady river and in traditional saying it was built by King Pyusawhti in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE. The bulbous dome of this stupa is similar to the Ngakywenadaung and crowned by the conical spire with the umbrella. (Paul Strachan, 1989, p.38) Similarly assumed as Pyu's stupas, it is one of early type stupa styles. It was destroyed in the earthquake of 1975, but the pagoda was reconstructed in the shape and size of the original. It is a one storey stupa and bell-shaped. The pagodas has a bulbous dome rather similar to that of the Ngakywenadaung. The dome surmounted by a bold, convex band and crowned by a tapering finial and Hti (umbrella). (Department of Historical Research, Glimpses of Glorious BAGAN, Yangon, 2014, p.32) Monument No.2014 is a small encased stupa, exist Northeast of Old Bagan and West of Taungbi. It has a circular bell-shaped dome and conical spire, dated to about during 13<sup>th</sup> century.

### Conclusion

After their cities being destroyed Pyu people lived in central Myanmar especially in Bagan area. And then, they contributed monuments by using their skill crafts. They built monuments including stupas found near the Ayeyarwady river. The original stupas from India were dome-shaped structure, the foundations of such dome shaped stupas are found in ancient sites of Myanmar like Beikthano, Halin and Sriksetra. It seems that this type of stupa was developed in Sriksetra without India's influence, and was found as a miniature model in Sriksetra, and actual constructed stupa was found in Bagan. In Bagan, there are traditional cultural heritage of ancient monuments along the east bank of Ayeyarwady river. There are evidences of so many pagodas, temples, monasteries and other religious monuments and other religious monuments in various parts of Myanmar. There are three main kinds of buildings, stupas, temples and monastic buildings which formed the largest numbers of religious monuments in Bagan. Among them, the stupa has many variant forms such as the dome stupa, terrace-stupa and encased stupa. In Bagan stupas, there are mostly bell shape, dome stupas but some of them are Pyu style stupas. Other types of stupas are found in Bagan in various shapes such as pentagonal, octagonal shapes, etc. Ngakywenadaung is a dome shaped stupa. According to Archaeologists, the Ngakywenadaung and Bupaya are said to belong to pre- Anawrahta period. It has no decoration and the structure of the Ngakywenadaung stupa is beautifully erected by the composition of

green-glazed bricks. This stupa is a dome shape stupa. Kyaukmyatmaw stupa is a bulbous dome and encased stupa. The shape of stupas of Bagan was derived from Old Pyu Cities, especially from Northern India which is accessible both by sea route and land route. In Myanmar, the influence of Andhra period and later Gupta of Sriksetra. The encased which exists in Bagan now are Kyaukmyatmaw Ceti, No-1225 and No.1863 (nearby southeast Ananda). Apart from these ceti maintained, Pauk Pin Ya, Byaing Paya, Hput Paya, Htuparon leysutan are stupas and (No-1071, 1157, 1155, 280, 1456,2014) are also the Pyu style encased stupas of Bagan especially the bank of the river. Most of this type of stupas in Bagan has no decoration. They are small stupas. But some of them have a good decoration such as friezes, niches and cornices, etc. The prototype stupa of Bagan has no decorations, in earliest time. In Myanmar, the Pyu style stupas flourished in Pyu Cities at first and then, they were evolved at Bagan dynasty especially along the bank of Ayeyarwady River.

This is the distribution pattern of Pyu style stupas in Ancient Bagan. Pyu style stupas found in old Bagan area are around the East bank of Ayeyarwady River. These Pyu style stupas were not found in the interior region of Bagan area such as Minanthu and Hpwa-saw area. It can be assumed that Pyu people settled near Ayeyarwady river. Pyu people distributed in Bagan area but they seemed to live near Myinkabar, Thiripyitsayar, Old Bagan area along the east bank of these River. This paper has attempted to illustrate urbanized society founded by Pyu people built small Pyu style stupas near the bank of the Ayeyarwady River especially in Bagan Area. It can be concluded that Pyu People preferred to live near the rivers and streams.

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Map.1 Location of Pyu Style Stupas in Thiripyitsayar Area

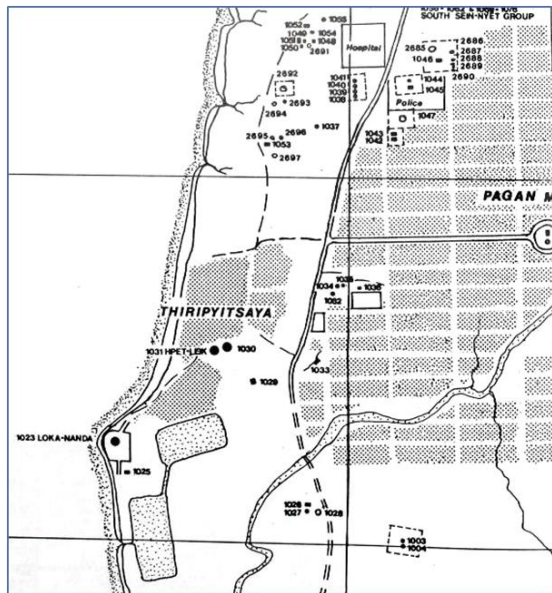


Fig.1 Lawkananda stupa

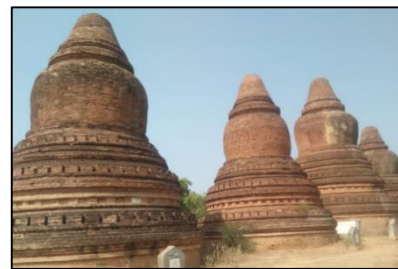


Fig.2 Htuparon Leysutan Stupa

Map.2 Location of Pyu Style Stupas in Myinkaba Area

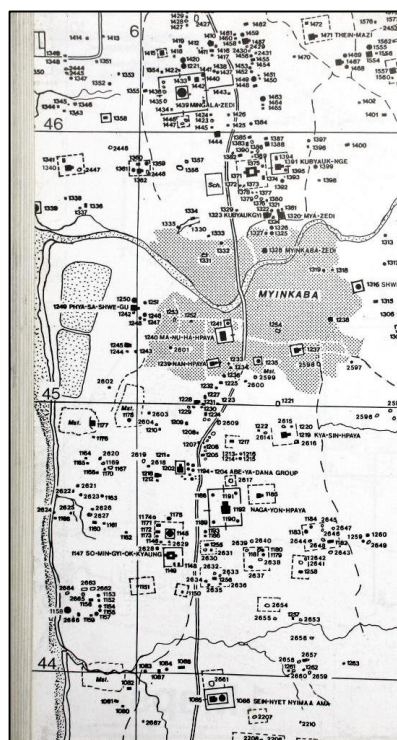




Fig.3 Kyauk Myat Maw Stupa

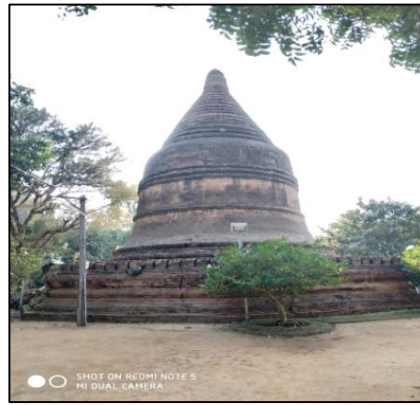
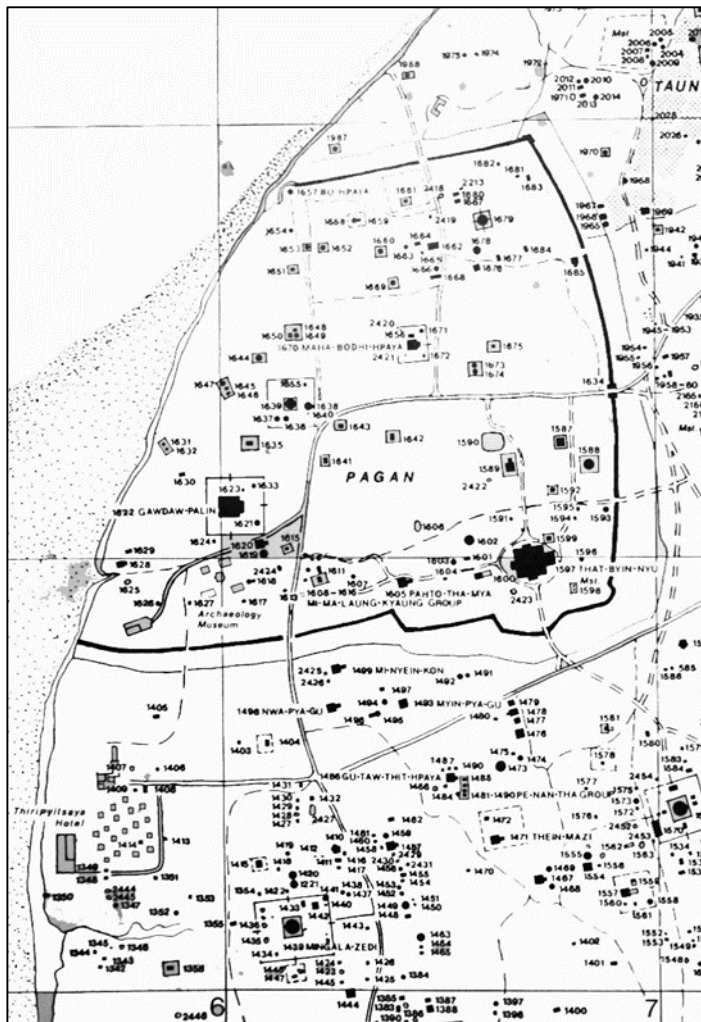


Fig.4 Myinkabar Stupa

Map.3 Location of Pyu Style Stupas in Old Bagan Area



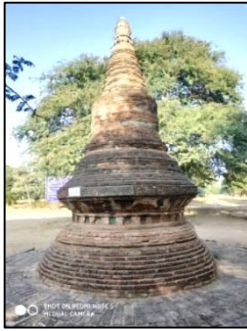


Fig.6 Hpa Stupa

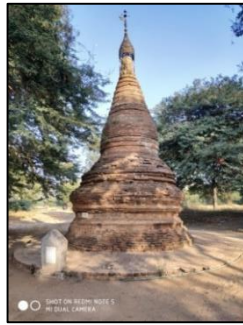


Fig. 7 Byaing Paya

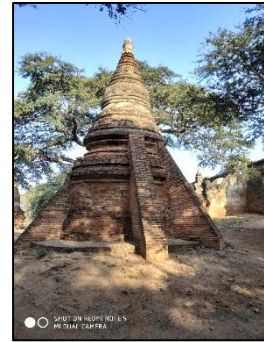


Fig. 8 Hput Paya



Fig. 9 Bu Paya



Fig.10 Ngakywenadaung Paya



Fig.11 Paukpinya Paya

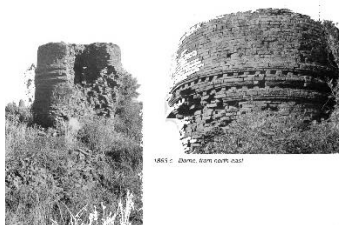


Fig.11 Monument (1863/1160)  
(Source From Pichard, Vol.VII, 1994)

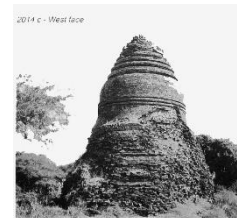


Fig.12 Monument (2014/1310)  
(Source From Pichard, Vol.VII, 1994)