

## Pyu Type Stupas in Old Bagan Area

Kay Zin Htun\*

### Abstract

Bagan belongs to archaeological monuments of nearly 4000 religious buildings and some of them are preserved in the original form but some of the buildings still exist in mounds. Among them, some of the monuments are stupas, and they have many variants such as the dome stupa, and terrace stupa. The original stupas from India were dome-shaped structures, India style stupas are also found in ancient Pyu sites. In Bagan stupas are mostly bell-shaped dome but some of them are other forms. Other types of stupas are found in the Bagan area in various shapes. Some of the monuments in Bagan are asserted to be those of Pre-Bagan period, named as Pyu type monuments. The Pyu type stupa of Bagan has mostly no decoration, in its earliest time. Pyu type stupas were mostly found along the bank of the river such as, Myinkaba, Thiripyitsayar and Old Bagan area, but these type stupas have not been rarely found in the inland area of Bagan region such as Minnanthu and Hpwa-Saw Area. In Myanmar, Pyu type stupas flourished in Pyu city at first, and then, they evolved during the Bagan dynasty.

Keywords: Pyu, dome stupa, bell-shaped stupa, Old Bagan city wall

### Introduction

The aim of the paper is to reveal the significant feature of the architectural style of Pyu Type stupas in old Bagan Area. Pyu type stupa reflects the early style of Bagan Ceti by the influence of Pyu culture. The paper describes the Pyu type features in the old Bagan area. Pyu type stupas were distributed in ancient Bagan such as Nyaung U, Wetkyi Inn, Taungbi, old Bagan area, Myinkaba, Thiripyitsaya, Hpwasaw and Minnanthu. Among them, some of the Pyu type stupa were found together in the Old Bagan area. This paper emphasized a part of the old Bagan area. However, the distinctive features of Pyu type stupa were associately found along the bank of Ayeyarwady river. These Pyu type stupas were mostly found in the old Bagan area, Myinkaba area and Thiripyitsaya area. In the inland region of Bagan such as Minnanthu and Hpwasaw area was rarely found the Pyu type stupa. In the Minnanthu area the Sinhalese type stupa in the 13<sup>th</sup> century and complex monasteries such as Sinphyushin complex monastery and Leymyathna complex monastery were mostly found. Remarkably, these Pyu style stupas have taken their outcome from the architectural style of the stupa of Pyu.

### Pyu Type stupas in Bagan

Pyu type stupa in Bagan has mostly no decoration. The Pyu style of solid stupas still exist at Sriksetra in the archaeological records.<sup>1</sup> But there is limited information about the detailed architectural styles in type and size of them, because of their fewer numbers in survival, and their present features which deviates from original shape as a result of renovation and other reconstruction works through the successive periods. But some traceable remains of Pyu style stupas can be found in those of the ancient monuments from Bagan. Architecture of Pyu was directly derived from Indian influences. According to literature, the Pyu people were literate people and their basic economy was agriculture. Sriksetra is a Buddhism that flourished in the 7<sup>th</sup> century CE by the record of two Chinese travellers. Pyu people built early urban societies Beikthano, Halin, Sriksetra in the 1<sup>st</sup>- mid 9<sup>th</sup> century CE. Pyu people were skillful craftsmen and Buddhists. Their country had fallen in nearly 9<sup>th</sup> century CE, and then the Pyu people were established into a new society in central Myanmar then the fall of their cities.<sup>2</sup> The country they founded country is known as Bagan just now.

---

\* Lecturer, Department of Archaeology, University of Yangon

<sup>1</sup> Paul Strachan, *Art and Architecture of Old Burma*, Scotland, Kiscadale Publications, 1989, pp.7-8 (Hereafter cited as Paul Strachan, *Art and Architecture of Old Burma*)

<sup>2</sup> Paul Strachan, *Art and Architecture of Old Burma*, p.7

## Archaeological Settings

Bagan exists in central Myanmar in a dry zone. 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 wall paintings. A lot of stupas, temples, simas, monasteries, caves and libraries were built in Bagan. Among them, some of the stupa are Pyu type stupa. Archaeological monuments in Bagan have 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.<sup>1</sup> Among them, the type of stupa is the second largest in the Bagan area. The stupas were distributed in Bagan environs such as around the Nyaung U, Wetkyi inn, Taungbi, old Bagan precinct, Myinkaba, Thiripyitsaya, Hpwasaw and Minnanthu area. The paper attempted to describe the Pyu type stupa near the Old Bagan area. Pyu style stupas in Old Bagan Area inside the city wall are such as Paukpinya (1614/922), Byaing Paya (1608/916), Hput Paya (1609/917), Hpa Paya (1610/918), Ngakywenadaung (1603/911) and Bupaya (No.1657/961) so on. Stupas are solid structures, and enshrine a sacred relic or particularly potent image of the Buddha. Buddhism had reached Bagan, the stupa had developed by the time. The earliest Buddhist dedications at Bagan were stupas based on the bulbous Pyu style.<sup>2</sup> The arts and especially architecture began to flourish during the reign of King Anawrahta. He built numerous religious buildings and residential buildings. Among them, Ngakywenadaung (1603/911) and Bupaya (No.1657/961) are said to belong to the Pre-Anawrahta period.<sup>3</sup> Pyu type stupa include bulbous stupa, dome shaped stupa, bell-shaped dome stupa, circular bulbous dome stupa, circular bell-shaped dome stupa and encased stupa. These encased stupas include Scovell's Pawdawmu (1690/922), Monument (No.1863/1160), Monument (No.280/190b), Monument (No.1456/769) and Monument (No.2014/1310) so on.

### Pyu Type Stupas in the City Wall

Stupas in Bagan can be classified according to the chronological order of Early, Middle, and Late Period. Pyu type stupas were mostly included in the early and middle Bagan period. In old Bagan precinct, Pyu type stupas are Paukpinya (1614/922), Byaing Paya (1608/916), Hput Paya (1609/917), Hpa Paya (1610/918), Ngakywenadaung (1603/911) and Bupaya (No.1657/961) and so on. These stupas exist nearly Bagan Archaeological Museum.<sup>4</sup>

### Paukpinya (1614/922)

This stupa is situated in the west of Nat-Hlaung-Kyung and Pa-Hto-Tha-Mya, in the east of Bagan archaeological museum. These Pyu type stupas were found together near the Bagan archaeological museum. Paukpinya stupa lies inside Bagan city wall. It is a small stupa and, it has a small circular base. The architectural style of stupa is a circular bulbous dome and circular crowning block.<sup>5</sup> The small stupas was built of brick and the average brick size is 32 x 16 x 4.5 cm. Paukpinya stupa was reconstructed between 1960 and 1978. It has no decorations such as stucco artworks and moldings. It was built in about the 12<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Kyaw Latt, *Art and Architecture of Bagan and Historical Background with Data of important Monuments*, Yangon, Mudon Sarpay, 2010, p. 12 (Hereafter cited as Kyaw Latt, *Art and Architecture of Bagan*)

<sup>2</sup> Paul Strachan, *Art and Architecture of Old Burma*, p. 14-15

<sup>3</sup> Pierre Pichard, *Inventory of Monuments at Pagan*, Vol.VI, Milanostampa in Italy, UNESCO, 1995, p.252 (Hereafter cited as *Pichard, Inventory of Monuments at Pagan*)

<sup>4</sup> See Map. (1)

<sup>5</sup> See Fig. (1)

<sup>6</sup> U Bo K, *ပုဂံသုတေသနလမ်းညွှန်*, *Research Guide to Bagan*, Yangon, Lwin U Press, Second Edition, 2015, p.187 (Hereafter cited as U Bo K, *Research Guide to Bagan*)

### **Byaing Paya (1608/916)**

Byaing Paya is situated in the southeast of Gawdaw-Palin and east of Bagan archaeological museum. It includes the inside of the Bagan city wall. It is associated with other Pyu type stupas. It is a small stupa. The plan of stupa is a circular base and it has two circular terraces. The upper part of this stupa was decorated with a circular bell-shaped dome and conical spire. This stupa was built in brick and the average size of brick is 36 x 18 x 5 cm. Nowadays, this stupa has no decoration, but traces of stucco moldings were found in this stupa. Some of the scholars assumed that it was built in about the 12<sup>th</sup> century CE.<sup>1</sup>

### **Hput Paya (1609/917)**

This stupa is situated in the west of Nat-Hlaung-Kyung and Pa-Hto-Tha-Mya, in the east of Bagan archaeological museum. It included the inside of the Bagan city wall. It was found to be associated with other Pyu type stupas. It is a small stupa, and it was built in brick and the average size of brick is 37 x 18 x 4 cm. This stupa has no decoration, but traces of stucco moldings were found in this stupa. Some of the scholars assumed that it was built in about the 13<sup>th</sup> century CE.<sup>2</sup>

### **Hpa Paya (1610/918)**

This stupa exists in the enclosure of the city wall and southeast of Gawdawpalin. It is a small stupa. It has a circular base and the upper parts of the stupa has a circular bell-shaped dome and conical spire. It was built by brick, the average size of bricks are 38 x 19 x 4 cm.<sup>3</sup> This stupa traces of stucco moldings.<sup>4</sup> It was built in about the 12<sup>th</sup> century CE.<sup>5</sup>

### **Ngakywenadaung (1603/911)**

This stupa is an early Pyu type stupa. This stupa is situated in the north of Nat-Hlaung-Kyaung and east of Pa-Hto-Tha-Mya. Pyu, whose city was attacked by Nanchao, brought with them elements of their culture to Bagan.<sup>6</sup> It is 44 feet by height, it was built by the king of Taungthugyi during *circa* 931-946 CE. The architectural style of Ngakywenadaung is similar to Bawbawgyi, Payagyi and Payamar of Sriksetra. This stupa is made of green glazed bricks and one of the best examples in Bagan Stupas. From the architectural point of view, it is a circular bulbous dome. Neither decoration nor embellishment could be traced but there might have been originally a finial above it. It was built as a brick building and the average size of brick is 42 x 21 x 6 cm and 36 x 17 x 6.5 cm. The dome of the stupa was badly cracked by the 1975 earthquake. The dome of this stupa was decorated with glazed brick. Some of the scholars assumed that it was built in some time during 11<sup>th</sup> century CE.<sup>7</sup> This stupa is termed by the scholars as "bulbous type", it is likely that this evolutionary development took place between Sriksetra and Bagan period. Since, only a miniature model was found in Sriksetra and an actual stupa was built in Bagan. The name of Ngakywenadaung was derived from a legendary strong man of

---

<sup>1</sup> See Fig. (3)

<sup>2</sup> Paul Strachan, *Art and Architecture of Old Burma*, p.187

<sup>3</sup> See Fig (5)

<sup>4</sup> See Fig (7)

<sup>5</sup> Pierre Pichard, *Inventory of Monuments at Pagan*, pp. 252-259

<sup>6</sup> Paul Strachan, *Art and Architecture of Old Burma*, p. 38

<sup>7</sup> G.H Luce, *Old Burma Early Bagan*, Vol.I, New York, Artibus Asia, 1969, pp. 258-259 (Hereafter cited as **G.H Luce, Old Burma Early Bagan**)

Bagan.<sup>1</sup>Indeed, the oldest monuments at Bagan, like the Ngakywenadaung are clearly of the Pyu type stupa and date to the 11<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>2</sup>

### **Bupaya (No.1657/961)**

The Bupaya is situated on the east bank of the Ayeyarwady river and in traditional saying it was built by King Pyusawhti in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE. The Bupaya's bulbous shape suggests Pyu origins and similar bulbous types are to be found at the Pyu sites. It was destroyed by an earthquake but it has been renovated in the shape and size of the original form. It is a small stupa and the plan of Bupaya has a circular base. The architectural style of stupa is circular bulbous dome and conical spire and crowned by the conical spire with the umbrella. The bulbous dome of this stupa is similar to the Ngakywenadaung.<sup>3</sup> It was built by brick and *circa* 11<sup>th</sup> century CE. It is crowned by a tapering finial and Hti (umbrella).<sup>4</sup> The most distinctive feature of the stupa form of the Bagan period can be traced to the Sinhalese type of stupa, encased stupas, Pyu type stupa and so on. The earliest Sinhalese type stupas in Bagan are Pebingyaung, Sapada and Sittanagyi. The encased stupa in Bagan are Kyaukmyatmaw, Monuments No.1863, Monument No.280, Monument No. 2014, Monument No.1456 and so on. The earliest Pyu type stupas in Bagan are Ngakywenadaung and Bupaya. The stupas have varied forms that also include bell shape and bulbous dome shape. The typical form of the Bagan stupa was clearly derived from India and Srilanka. The original India stupa were dome-shaped structures, the foundation of such dome shaped stupas are also found in ancient Pyu sites. In Myanmar, the earliest evidence of Buddhist stupas was found in KKG-3, one of the excavated mounts in Beikthano city.<sup>5</sup>

### **Pyu Type Stupa outside of Bagan city wall**

With regard to the distribution pattern of Pyu type stupa mentioned above, this part was slightly described as the Pyu style stupa outside of the Bagan city wall. Pyu type stupas such as Inn Paya, Scovell's Pawdawmu and Myinkaba stupa are discussed in detail.

### **Inn Paya (772/366)**

Inn Paya is situated in the north of Dhammayangyi and to the southeast of ancient Bagan city wall. This is a large stupa. The plan of the stupa is an octagonal base and the upper part is decorated with a circular terrace and conical dome. It was built by brick masonry building and the average brick size is 32 x 16 x 5 cm. The upper part of the stupa has a terrace and traces of stucco artwork. It was built around the 12<sup>th</sup> century CE. The body of the stupa is a bell-shaped like a stupa. This stupa can be seen with glazed plaques. Inn Paya designs are like the Bawbawgyi stupa in Sriksetra.<sup>6</sup>

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

This stupa is situated to the northwest of Dhammayangyi and to the southeast of old Bagan precinct. It is a small stupa and assumed to be a type of encased stupa. It is a small stupa formerly encased in a large one and it is a circular bell-shaped dome and short conical spire. It is a brick building and the average brick size is 34 x 17 x 5.8 cm. This stupa contains the traces of stucco moldings and the dome shape of the body was decorated with floral frieze motifs. It was built in about the 12<sup>th</sup> century CE.<sup>7</sup> Scovell's Pawdawmu encased stupa has been exposed

<sup>1</sup> Department of Historical Research, *Glimpses of Glorious Bagan*, Yangon, 2014, p.27 (Hereafter cited as Department of Historical Research, *Glimpses of Glorious Bagan*)

<sup>2</sup> See Fig. (9)

<sup>3</sup> Paul Strachan, *Art and Architecture of Old Burma*, p. 38

<sup>4</sup> Department of Historical Research, *Glimpses of Glorious Bagan*, p.32

<sup>5</sup> See Fig. (11)

<sup>6</sup> See Fig. (13)

<sup>7</sup> G.H Luce, *Old Burma Early Bagan*, Vol.I, p.281

since 1918, when Scovell dismantled the encasing stupa. The encased stupas in the Bagan period were partly exposed to show architectural changes and development of stupas in that period.<sup>1</sup>

### Myinkaba Stupa

This stupa is situated in Myinkaba village and to the southwest of Myazedi pagoda, to the south of Myinkaba Gubyaukgyi. It is a medium sized stupa, and has an octagonal terrace and circular bell shaped dome. The architectural style of Myinkabar Stupa is one of the few stupas in the Bagan area. The average brick size of a building is 38 x 19 x 6 cm. This stupa contains traces of stucco artworks. Some of the scholars assumed that it was built in about the 11<sup>th</sup> century CE. The architectural style of Myinkaba stupa was slightly changed from Bawbawgyi stupa. The Myinkaba stupa was built in the early Bagan period. Myinkaba Ceti is a Pyu style stupa in Bagan dating back from about the early Bagan period. This Stupa is a dome shaped stupa and a finial which foreshadow Anawrahta's later work.<sup>2</sup>

### Conclusion

The architectural style of Paukpinya stupa is a circular bulbous dome and circular crowning block. The upper part of Byaing stupa was decorated with a circular bell - shaped dome and conical spire. Hput stupa has no decoration, but traces of stucco moldings were found in this stupa. Hpa stupa has a circular base and the upper parts of the stupa have circular bell - shaped domes and conical spires. Ngakywenadaung stupa is made of green glazed bricks and it is a circular bulbous dome. Bupaya is a bulbous dome shaped stupa and the shape of this stupa is similar to the Ngakywenadaung. Ngakywenadaung is a dome shaped stupa. Ngakywenadaung and Bupaya are said to belong to the pre- Anawrahta period according to written records. The structure of the stupa is beautifully erected by the composition of green-glazed bricks. The shape of stupas in Bagan was derived from Old Pyu City. Apart from these ceti maintained above, Pauk Pin Ya, Byaing Paya, Hput Paya, Hpa Paya, Ngakywenadaung and Bupaya are Pyu type stupa of Bagan. Most of these Pyu type stupas in Bagan have no decoration and they are small in sizes. But some of the later stupas have good decorations such as friezes, niches and cornices. The assemblage of Pyu type stupas in old Bagan area are very rare and they should be preserved for the younger generation.

### Acknowledgements

I would like to thank to Dr. Tin Maung Tun, Rector, Dr. Thidar Aye, Dr. Cho Cho, Dr. Khin Chit Chit, Pro-Rectors, University of Yangon, for permitting the opportunity to present this paper. I am also especially thankful to our teacher Dr. Soe Ni Tun, our Professor and Head of the Archaeology Department, University of Yangon for the permission and encouragement to undertake this research.

### References

#### Primary Source

Field Research (18.9. 2020)

#### Secondary Source

#### Myanmar Books

Aung Kyaing, U *ပုဂံခေတ်ဗိသုကာလက်ရာများ, Architectures Aspects of Bagan Period*, Third Edition, Yangon, Aung Chan Thar Press, 1997

Myo Nyunt, U (Archaeology) *ပုဂံခေတ်အနုပညာနှင့် ခေတ်ဗိသုကာနှင့် အနုလက်ရာများ, Late of Arts and Architecture in Bagan Region*, Yangon Yon Kyi Chest Press, 2007

<sup>1</sup> See Fig. (15)

<sup>2</sup> See Fig. (17)

Than Swe, U *သမိုင်းဝင်စေတီ ပုထိုးများ*, *Historical Monuments at Bagan*, Yangon, Myawaddy Press, 1994

Hla Tha Me *ပုံရိပ်မြင်ကွင်းကျယ်*, *Stereoscopies View of Bagan*, Yangon, Padamyar Nga Mouk Press, 1999

Myo Nyunt, U (Archaeology) *ပုံရိပ်ပုထိုးများ ၏ ဗိသုကာနှင့် အနုလင်္ကာ*, *Art and Architecture of Bagan Monuments*, Yangon, Yaung Zin Press, 1999

Bo K, U *ပုဂံသုတေသနလမ်းညွှန်*, *Research Guide to Bagan*, Yangon, Lwin U Press, 2015

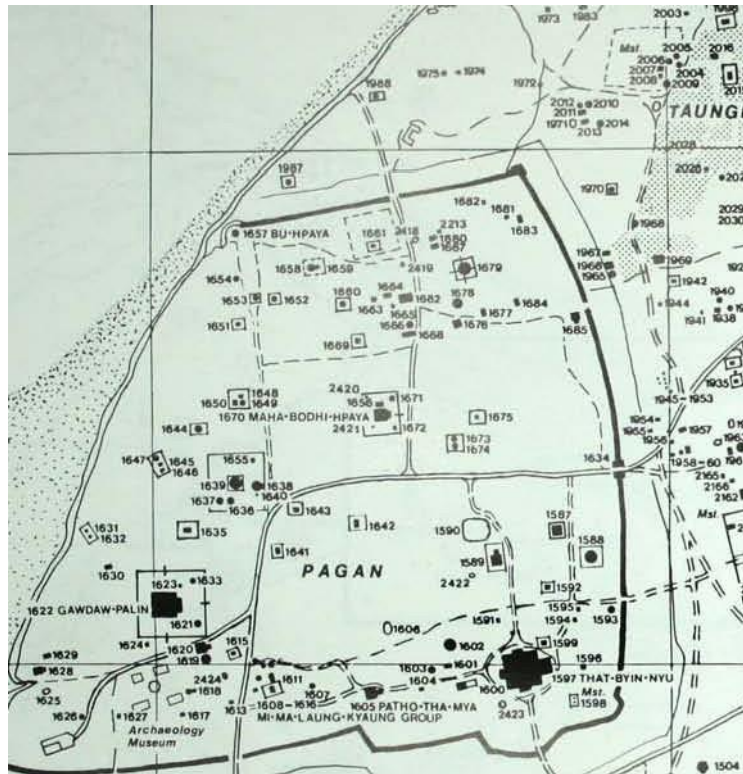
Aung Kyaing, U *ခေတ်အဆက်ဆက်မြန်မာ့ပန်းချီများ*, *The Successive Period of Myanmar Wall Paintings*, Yangon, Srivatsa Press, 2018

#### **English Books**

Kyaw Latt, Dr *Art and Architecture of Bagan and Historical Background with Data of Important Monument*, Yangon, Mudon Sarpay, 2010

Strachan, Paul *Art and Architecture of Old Burma*, Scotland, Kiscadale Publications, 1989

Pichard, Pierre *Inventory of Monuments at Pagan*, Vol.I to Vol.VIII, UNESCO, France, 1992.2001 Luce, G.H *Old Burma Early Bagan*, Vol.I, New York, Artibus Asia, 1969



Map.1 Location of Pyu Style Stupas in Old Bagan Precinct interior of city wall



Figure (1) Paukpinya (1614/922)



Figure (2) Plan of Paukpinya (Source From Pichard V.I, 1995)



Figure (3) Byaing Paya (1608/916)

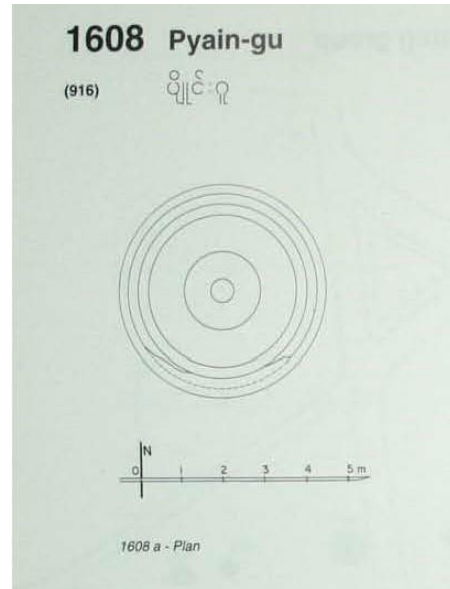


Figure (4) Plan of Byaing Paya (Source From Pichard V.I, 1995)

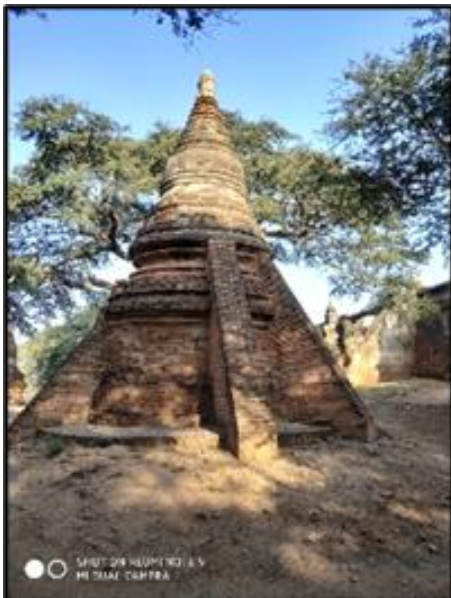


Figure (5) Hput Paya (1609/917)

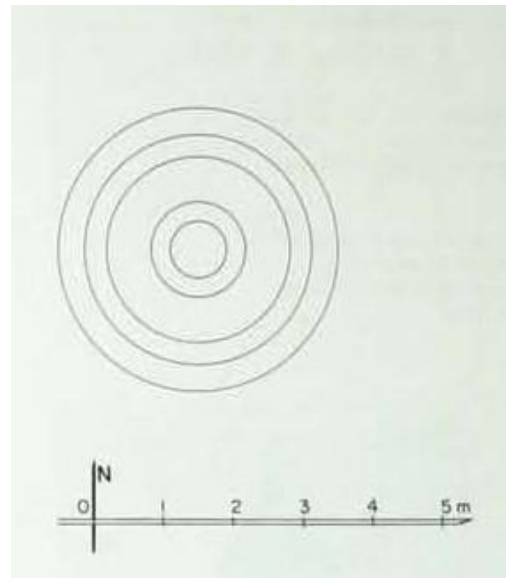


Figure (6) Plan of Hput Paya (Source From Pichard V.I, 1995)



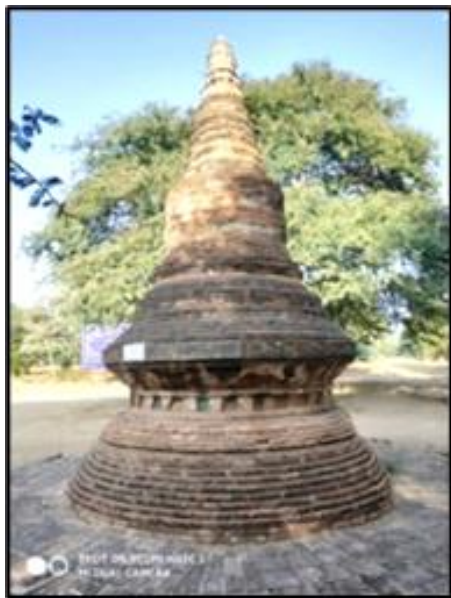


Figure (7) Hpa Paya (1610/918)



Figure (8) Plan of Hpa Paya (Source From Pichard V.I, 1995)

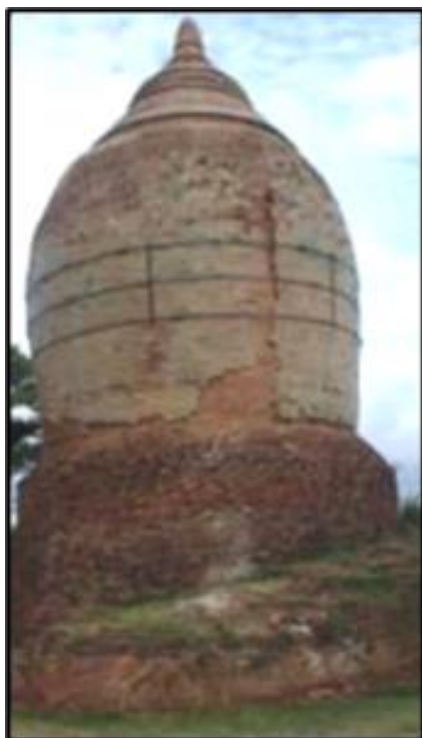


Figure (9) Ngakywendaung (1603/911)

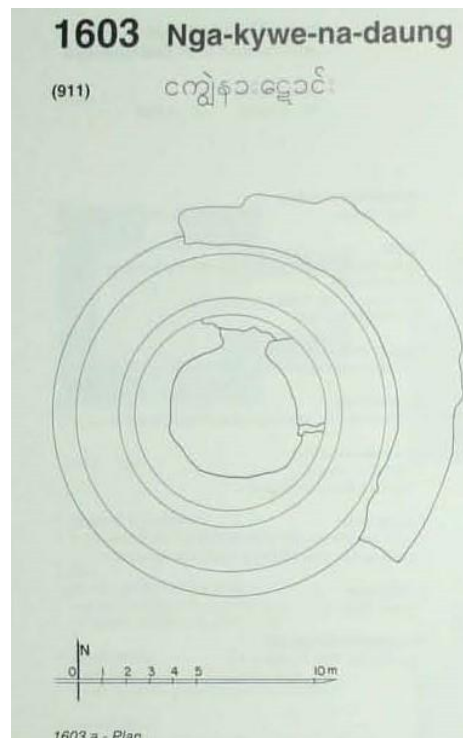


Figure (10) Plan of Hpa Paya (Source From Pichard V.I, 1995)



Figure (11) Bupaya  
(Source From Pichard V.I, 1995)

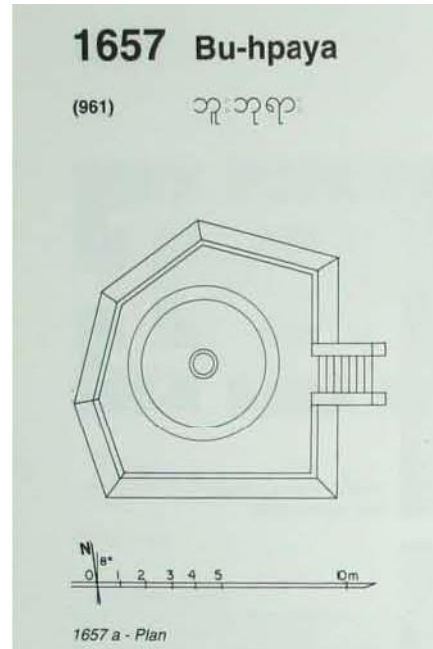


Figure (12) Plan of Bupaya  
(Source From Pichard V.I, 1995)



Figure (13) Inn Paya  
(Source From Pichard V.I, 1995)

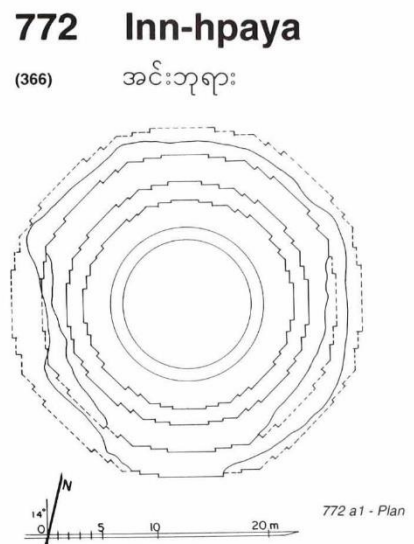


Figure (14) Plan of Inn Paya  
(Source From Pichard V.I, 1995)



Figure (15) Scovell's Pawdawmu (1690/922)  
(Source From Pichard V.I, 1995)



Figure (16) Plan of Scovell's Pawdawmu (1690/922)  
(Source From Pichard V.I, 1995)



Figure (17) Myinkaba Stupa (1328/652)

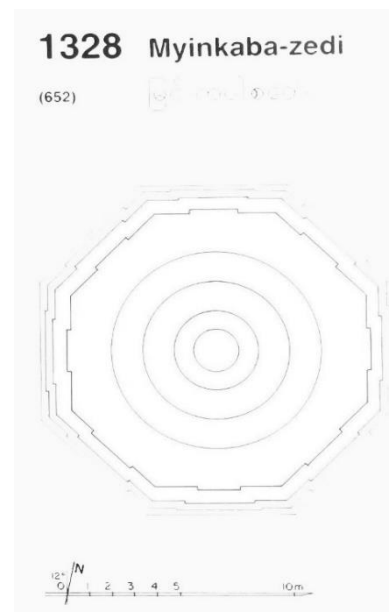


Figure (18) Plan of Myinkaba Stupa (1328/652)  
(Source From Pichard V.I, 1995)

