

FOREWORD

Mya Nan San Kyaw (the Royal Palace) was first built by King Mindon (1853-1878), the founder of the Golden City of Yadanabon, Mandalay. Concerning the founding and the construction of the great palace, there are many historical records. Detailed information as to the step-by-step process of construction, the ceremonies to be performed at each step can be found particularly in the *City & Palace Construction Record* written by Sithu Maung Maung Kyaw. Dates and times -- even the exact hour-- are recorded there.

There are some references in English too. *Archaeological Notes on Mandalay* by Taw Sein Ko and *Guide to the Mandalay Palace* by Chas. Duroselle are good examples. After Myanmar gained independence, Duroselle's work was republished under the name of *Mandalay Palace* by U Aung Thaw, Director of Myanmar Archaeological Survey. The new work contained plates of detailed drawings and photographs of the Mandalay Palace.

A well-known abbot, writing under the pen-name of Yadanabon Po Hmat Su, wrote a booklet entitled *Mandalay*. The same writer but under the new pen-name of Shwe Gaing Thar wrote another work entitled the *Century Old Mandalay* in which a more complete description of the palace is given. Both these books were based on Saya Pe Gyi's manuscripts on the "Golden Capital."

The best-known work on the Mandalay Palace as a guidebook is Yin Gei Hteik Tin Prince's *About the Golden Palace*. The prince had lived in the palace in his life-time, and so it was first-hand information.

Since 1989, the State Law and Order Restoration Council [SLORC] has been restoring the palace in its original form. The reconstruction of the "Golden Palace" with all its grandeur and old-time charms was carried out with three aims in view, namely:

- to revive and strengthen patriotism,
- to maintain and protect national sovereignty, and
- to encourage national culture.

With these three aims, and following the instructions of the Chairman of the SLORC Senior General Than Shwe, detailed reconstruction operations were first laid out.

A central Supervisory Committee has been formed with the Central Command Commander as patron. Deputy Commander as chairman and sixteen other members, and this Committee is carrying out the reconstruction activities.

The platform of the palace measures 1004 ft. from east to west and 574 ft. from north to south. The number of buildings on this platform varied in successive periods, namely, the period following King Mindon's move from Amarapura to Mandalay, that between King Mindon's death (1240 M.E. [1878 A.D.]) and King Thibaw's ascension to the throne, and the time in which King Thibaw was put into exile (1247 M.E. [1885 A.D.]). The aim of reconstruction activities was to recreate the palace as it existed in the third period mentioned. More records and evidence are available concerning the palace in this period. In addition, the brick walls and platform of the Summer Palace and the Southern Flower Distributing Room built during the time of King Thibaw are still extant. It is also

considered that the Watch Tower, built during that period by foreign architects, should also be rebuilt. Therefore, a total of 114 buildings, the number which actually existed on the platform of the palace in the period beginning from 1247 M.E. (1886 A.D.) are decided to be reconstructed.

The aim of this guidebook is to help visitors and interested persons to obtain as much knowledge as possible in a short time with limited amount of reading.