

Author's Preface

The author has up to now written and published altogether 93 books.

This is my 94th book.

It is not my intention to make a list of the books I have so far written, but to convey as precisely as possible my aims concerning this newly completed book and the emotions that it stirred in me; as well as the untold benefits of the time and effort that I expended in its research.

In reading and rereading what I had written while making revisions time and again, I came to appreciate and understand in all aspects, the brilliant and exceptional personalities of the monarchs who founded Bagan.

Despite the thousands of years that have elapsed, the founding monarchs of Bagan have left an enduring legacy of their prowess and endeavours for the edification and pride of later generations. They left behind as legacy a large amount of material evidence as well as recorded historical accounts of their achievements. The principal aim of the author is to lay before the readers all this evidence in the form of material objects, well documented literature, traditional oral accounts handed down through the generations as well as evidence of their indisputable religious fervour and devotion without leaving untold even a minuscule speck of this illustrious saga of our forebears, the great Citizens of Bagan.

I genuinely believe that Bagan still stands today in this region in all her former majesty and magnificence. My conviction is absolute and unconditional. Even with regard to King Sawlu, also known as 'King Sri Waza Barana', I came to understand through my studies at Bagan, that he was not a weak and ineffectual king as he was usually portrayed in history texts, but was in fact a noteworthy character with outstanding capabilities contrary to the view still held on to by many. I did not unwittingly arrive at this conclusion. I had had the good fortune of seeing at first hand the Buddha images and other religious monuments of merit he donated and the works of art adorning these monuments and images, in addition to which I had also had the opportunity of studying the historical writings of Professor G. H.

The Great donors of Bagan and Their Religious Monuments

Luce and Professor Dr. Than Tun. The Buddha images donated by Sri Waza Barana are endowed with such grace and elegance that the observer feels a sense of wonder and delight.

In writing this historical account of Bagan my desire is to stimulate the same emotions in others and awaken their dormant sense of pride and joy. The author realizes that the great historians of the past and those who are dedicated to the study of history are motivated by the same goals, and that they have undertaken continuous study and research for many years. I began to write this book on **The Great Religious Donors of Bagan and their Religious Monuments** because I understand this all too well. I sincerely hope and believe that this book will revive and revitalize the aims and efforts of these lovers of history who toiled so hard to make history come alive.

The author has included in this book photographs of newly found artifacts and works of art such as terra cotta votive tablets, mural paintings, Buddha images edged with gold leaf and gold plated Buddha images. These are photographs of recently discovered material evidence of Bagan culture

It is true that I had to expend great physical and mental energy in writing this book. But it would have been of no avail without the generous aid and assistance I received from the numerous persons to whom I owe a debt of gratitude.

They are Bagan scholar and researcher U Aung Kyaing and his son the curator of the Bagan Museum; well-known photographer Bagan Maung Maung and his family and U Sein Myo Myint who kindly introduced me to all these individuals. Then there is designer Myo Swe Than who bore the brunt of my impatient urging with fortitude. My thanks are also due to the young people of Bagan whose stimulating company and support helped me to successfully write a book of such depth and breadth. I would also like to record my thanks to responsible staff of the Ministry of Culture for all the help extended.

Last but not least, my heartfelt thanks go to my daughter Nant Chit Kyi who, with great forbearance fulfilled my every need. Without her I would not have been able to write and complete this book. She is my daughter; nevertheless thanks must be given where thanks are due.

PHOTO CAPTIONS

1. Myinkaba Chedi
2. Shwehsandaw Chedi
3. Shwezigon Chedi
4. Lokananda Chedi
5. Votive Tablet (made by Sri Aniruddha Deva)
6. Kyaukmyetmaw Chedi
7. PahtoTharmyar Chedi
8. Votive Tablet (made by Sri Waza Barana)
9. Myinpya Gu (cave temple)
10. Mural Painting on wall of circumambulatory (Myinpya Gu)
11. Inn Phayagyi Chedi
12. Buddha figure in gold relief
13. Bulethi Chedi
14. Sint Pahto Chedi
15. Ananda Cave Temple
16. Standing Buddha in southern Ananda Cave Temple Prayer Hall
(King Hti Laing's work of merit)
17. Nagayon Cave Temple
18. Figure of Lokanat (Nagayon Cave Temple)
19. First Buddhist Council
(Mural painting, Myinkaba Gupyaugyi Cave Temple)
20. King Kawthala (Mural painting, Myinkaba Gupyaugyi Cave Temple)
21. Latticed Window (Myinkaba Gupyaugyi Cave Temple)
22. Shwegugyi Chedi
23. Dhammayangyi Cave Temple

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