A Burma River Journey

A HANDBOOK FOR TRAVELLERS

by Paul Strachan

Kiscadale Publications 1st Edition 1997

By the old Moulmein Pagoda, lookin' lazily at the sea,
There's a Burma girl a-settin', and I know she thinks o' me;
For the wind is in the palm trees, and the temple bells they say:
'Come you back you British soldier; come you back to Mandalay!'

Come you back to Mandalay,
Where the old Flotilla lay:
Can't you 'ear their paddles chunkin' from Rangoon to Mandalay?
Where the flyin' fishes play,
An' the dawn comes up like thunder outer China 'crost the Bay!

Published in 1997 by Kiscadale Publications for
the Irrawaddy Flotilla Co. Ltd
Gartmore, Stirlingshire, FK8 3RJ
Scotland

Tel 01877 382 998 Fax 01877 382 778

ISBN 1 870838 57 2

Printed in the United Kingdom

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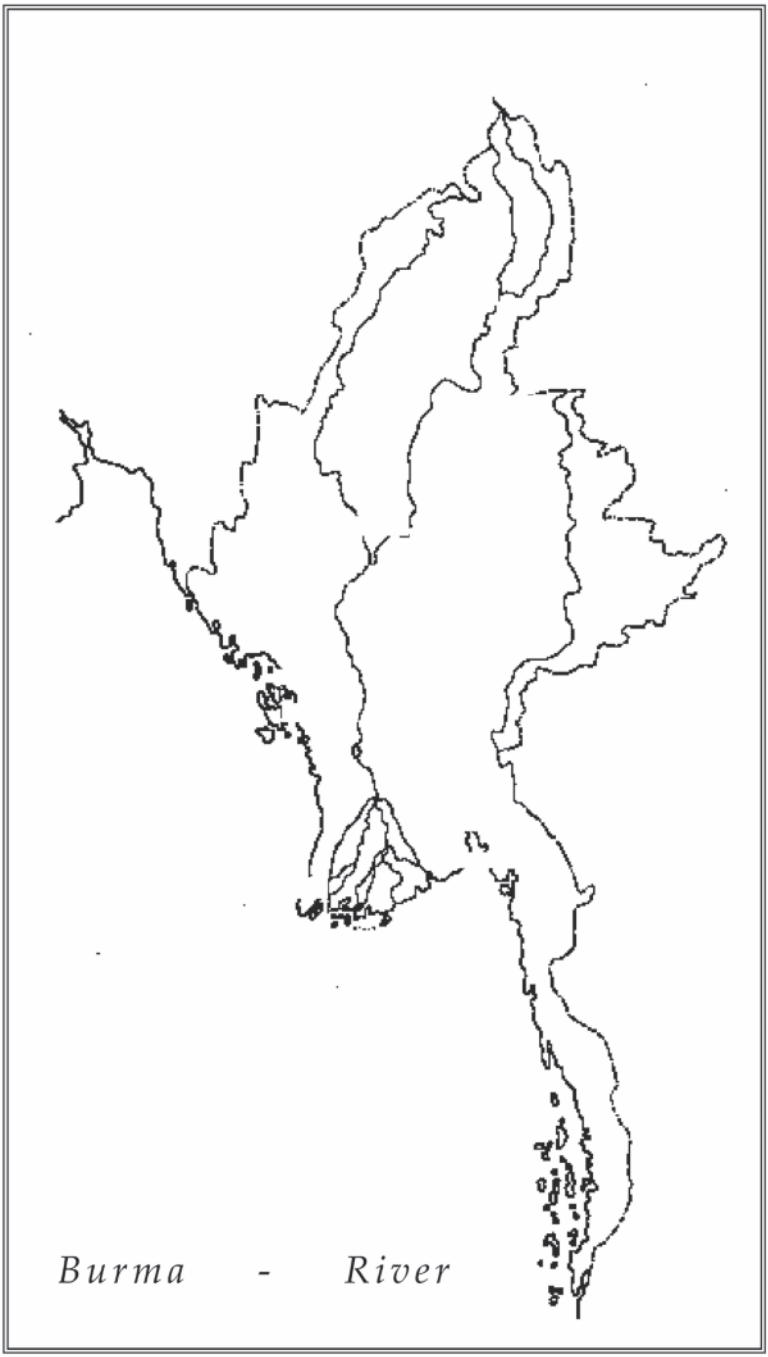
Burma - River

Introduction

"Further on will be found a short description of the various places of call on the River, but, while all of these possess their own particular interest, scenic, or otherwise the principal charm of a trip lies in its complete restfulness. Without any effort on his part, the traveller is enabled to survey the beauties of his surroundings, the life of the river, the customs and habits of a delightful people and the products and industries from which the country's wealth is derived. There is no hustle nor is there the monotony of a sea voyage, for something of interest is always in site.

A peaceful serenity lies over everything. There is a soothing quality in the soft chunking of the paddles as they enter the water, and even in the monotone of the leadsmans chant. Villages slip past and paddy fields stretch flat to a distant horizon. A canoe goes past with its solitary occupant tending its nets. The gentle creek of a sampans oars comes from the bank where it is seeking the slack water. Huge rafts, built of teak felled in jungles hundreds of miles away, make their liesurely journey to the great timber mills of Rangoon. The deep mellow note of the monastery gong mingles with the gentle tinkle of temple bells swaying in the breeze.

As each day carries us farther into the upper country, the ineffable peace of the dawn, the flaming glory of the sunset are alike mirrored in the tranquil stream, whose placid surface repeats in detail the wooded hills and rocky bluffs, crowned with pagodas..."

Burma by the IRRAWADDY FLOTILLA COMPANY, 1935

Sixty years later the river scene remains unchanged, other than the hum of a generator which has replaced the chunking of the paddle. Even the leadsman's chant is the

same, for echo sounders have proved a far less effective technique for gauging the river's depth than the old method of poling. If the account describes the river of 1935, or today in the 1990s, it could also describe the river of the 1860s when the Flotilla was first formed.

Our expedition is a journey through timelessness. It is also a journey through the history of Burma and a fascinatinating dissection of Burmese Buddhist life at first hand. Without the Nile there would be no Egypt, so too without the Irrawaddy there would be no Burma. Scarcely an event occured in the country's history without the involvement of the river. Through the inhospitable maze of the Delta Buddhism passed from ocean to interior, bringing with it trade and culture. Negotiating traitorous sandbanks and vast shallows raftsmen brought the millions of tons of clay brick tiles with which Pagan, wonder of the world, was constructed. War was conducted by splendid dragon-like galleys up and down the waters and peace in gilded long boats bearing venerable prelates. For millenia, and today, the country's prosperity depended on the traffic of goods, manufactured along its rich banks, upstream and downstream. Until the 19th century roads were virtually non-existant; the river and its tributaries connected disparate centers of agriculture and manufacture with administration and the ever prevalent Buddhist faith. Most of Burma's capitals were founded close to her banks — which makes it very convenient for our travellers, and without the river and the Irrawaddy Flotilla, the house of Ava would never have fallen to the British Raj. In 1886 the company's steamers forced the fall of Mandalay and transported the ill-fated king, Thibaw and his queen, Supayarlat, into life-long exile. Despite the introduction of a road and rail infrastructure during the colonial period, the river remained the main conduit for transportation of people and goods and the Irrawaddy Flotilla Company became the greatest flotilla the world has ever known. In the Second War the river was crucial again, and for that

reason over 600 company vessels were scuppered by her officers in a supreme act of denial.

Today, after Independence, the river remains the artery that pumps life through Burma, irrigating its rich plains, and offering up a mighty catch of fish that forms the protein staple for millions. Teak continues to be carried from Burma's highland plantations to waiting seaports; oil from its desert Dry Zone to distant refineries; Delta paddy through creek and canal to rusting mills; grains to the grannaries; thick raw cotton to spinners and weavers. For all its length a fertile hinterland oozes abundant produce out towards the river for shipment up or down where riverside centers of manufacture gently throb with activity.

Perhaps one of the finest descriptions of the river is by VC Scott O'Connor:

"It is no light undertaking to describe this majestic creature. Its length and volume, its importance as an artery of the world, its rise and fall — these are easily recorded facts. The beauty of its waters that mirror a sky of varied loveliness, of its hills and forests and precipitous heights, of its vast spaces that bring a calm to the most fretful spirit, of the sunsets that wrap it in mysteries of colour — these are things for which words are greatly inadequate. A great painter might attempt the picture, but he would do so only with the knowledge that he would leave it incomplete, for he could only paint a phase of that which is infinite in its variety. He could but tell little of the human interest with which it is fraught; of the long historic procession that fills the mind's eye, the migration of prehistoric races, the movement of peoples under the impulse of immutable laws, the advance of invading armies, the flight and agony of the vanquished, the triumph of exultant victors; of kings and nobles and warriors; of saints and ascetics; of the life of common people, with its passing joys and sorrows, in all of which the silent immortal river has played its continuous part. One cannot entrap the

glory of that which lives and moves, and is yet in its entity and suggestiveness eternal."

VC SCOTT O'CONNOR *The Silken East* 1904

The Irrawaddy Flotilla Company has played host to writers, artists, statesmen and kings. In the days of the Indian Empire a cruise on one of the company's steamers was compulsary for successive Prince's of Wales. As the 1935 company handbook described:

"No one need be deterred from making the river trip in Burma by any fear as to the nature of the accomodation provided on the steamers. In the depth's of the jungle, 1,000 miles from Rangoon he can live as luxuriously as in any hotel ashore."

Again, the situation remains unchanged. Whilst we sip our drinks on deck before the smouldering blaze of a vermilion sunset we can imagine less prudent travellers sore from bumpy rides, struggling with baggage and hotel registers, as they check in and out of local hotels on each day of a whistlestop, dusty land tour.

This *Handbook* will we hope provide the traveller with a quick overview of Burmese history and culture and a brie descriptiomn of the towns and villages we will stop at between Prome and Mandalay. It has evolved from various fact sheets that we have handed out to our traveller's over the past two years. It is not exactly a guide book, nor a comrehensive source of reference to the country, but rather a hotchpotch of information that might be considered relevant to an Irrawaddy journey.

We hope that your journey will live up to all expectations and that you will find the river journey as relaxing as the expeditions ashore are stimulating. Like those who for the past hundred and thirty years have preceeded you in Irrawaddy Flotilla Company ships, we hope that your

memories of the 'Golden Land' and its glimmering, incandescent river will stay with you, always.

Paul Strachan
Gartmore, 1997

Part One - History

The Pyu and the Arrival of Buddhism in Burma

The origins and development of Buddhism are described in Part Two — Culture. To take up the story here, by the early centuries AD Buddhism had begun to penetrate across the Indian ocean into the rich lands of South-East Asia and there were early trading settlements showing Buddhist influence along Burma's southern coastline. These were small city states occupied by the Mon people and open to the influence of Indian traders. Modern Burmese follow the Theravada school of Buddhism but in the early centuries AD religious life in Burma was mixed. At Thaton archaeologists have found both Theravada and Mahayana images as well as Hinu or Brahmanic works.

This so-called 'Indianisation' was not confined to the coast and by the 5th century AD early civilistations were springing up along the length of the Irrawaddy valley as well as in the Arakan, the maritime region of modern day Burma close to present day Bangladesh. These people were called the Pyu and have been described as the proto-Burmese. It is interesting to speculate whether there were land routes connecting the Irrawaddy Valley to India, for example through the Arakan via the Taungup Pass due west from Thare-ya-kit-tiya. Images and icons, particularly bronzes, were portable and one can imagine merchant, monk or brahman bringing favoured objects of worship from India. Also during these early centuries AD, when Indian religions came to Burma, local schools formed and in local stones copies grew from originals carried in. Quite often the iconography or attributes of an image deviate, through ignorance or misunderstanding, from Indian prototypes. Thus began the Burmese tradition of sculpture, drawing from the great tradition of India and the native genius.

The Pyu possessed a brick based culture and early city sates like Thare-ya-kit-tiya (sometimes written with the Sanskrit spelling of 'Sri Ksetra') outside Prome took the stupa and temple, the principle Buddhist forms of architecture, and adapted them developing strcutural techniques for pointed arches and vaults that were to reach a high point later at Pagan.

The Pyu had a script of their own and produced numerous small terracotta votive plaques bearing a legend usually in Sanskirt but occasionally in Pyu. They treated with the Chinese emperors and in fact more is known of the Pyu from the Chinese court chronicles than from indigenous literature. From these we know that the Pyu were a devout Buddhist people refusing to wear silk because the taking of life was envolved. A Pyu embassy to the Tang court in 801AD had caused a sensation with its exotic music and dance, exquisite jewellry and strange costumes. The Chinese chroniclers described the Pyu capital of Thare-ya-kittiya and were impressed by its religious lif — here was an established Buddhist civilisation that had spread from walled city-state oases to dominate the Irrawaddy Valley from Prome on the fringes of the Delta to as far north as Tagaung close to the Chinese Nanchao kingdom. Judging by the sculpture found in these sites it would seem that like the Mon there was little distinction between the Theravada and Mahayana sects. We visit the archaeological site at Thaye-ya-kit-tiya near Prome that is the largest and best preserved Pyu settlement from this period.

Pagan: from City-State to Empire

We have no information as to the political organisation of the Pyu — whether the city sates were federated or even unified under a single ruler. In 832 we know that the Nanchao Chinese raided the Irrawaddy Valley and Thare-ya-kit-tiya fell; thereafter Pyu civilisation waned. By the 10th century a new tribe, the Myanma, came to promi-

nance. Their language belonged to the same Tibeto-Burmese language family as the Pyu and it is debatable whether their rise was the result of a sudden migration down the Irrawaddy valley from the Himalayas or whether they were the direct descendents of the fallen Pyu. Pagan was the centre of this Myanma culture and its earliest temples, stupas and sculpture all show a close connection with Pyu prototypes found at Thare-ya-kit-tiya. The Pyu script remained in use at Pagan as late as 1113 where it was used in the famous Myazedi Inscription.

The Burmese chronicles, compiled in the 18th and 19th centuries, trace the kings of Pagan far back beyond the realms of history and indeed Pagan may well have been one of many Pyu city states. However, by the 11th century AD under the leadership of two great kings, Anawratha and Kyansittha, Pagan came to dominate the entire valley, from Bhamo in the north to the Mon port of Thaton in the south. The other great change dating from this period is the transformation of Burmese religious life. The Pagan kings chose to follow the Theravada faith, and whislt various sects had co-existed before this time, the Pagan kings undertook a 'purification'. With empire came religious hegemony. Church supported state and vice versa, a relationship maintained through all subsequent periods of Buddhism, even during the British Raj, and particularly today.

As a consquence of imperial and spiritual victories the Pagan kings embarked on a programme of monument construction. In three energetic centuries the arid plain of Pagan became a world center of the Buddhist faith, and its art and architecture. A recent Unesco inventory counted no less than 3,000 temples, pagodas and mounds. This was the last inventory since the 15th century when a royal survey counted over 4,000.

As with the Burmese today, people then were intensely pious. Economic, social and court life revolved around the making of merit. Theravada Buddhism can be astonish-

ingly unegotistical. Great kings raised momuments that were technically in advance of contemporay European cathedrals yet told us nothing about themselves. In their brief, matter of fact, dedicatory inscriptions they rarely boast of wealth or power but rather humbly prey for salvation for themselves, their subjects and all mankind. In contemporay Cambodia kings were gods and the centers of meglamanial cults, living in temple palaces. At Pagan we do not even know where they lived and all we know of great 12th century kings like Sithu I, who reigned for 30 years, consolidated the empire and completed the great work of nation wide religious purification, and built the stupendous That-byin-nyu temple, is his name.

By the erection of the Myazedi inscription in 1113 the Myanma or Burmese language has come to posess a script of its own and this is used alongside the ancient religious language of Pali, and the old languages of Pyu and Mon. During the early period of Pagan, Mon culture seems to have been the dominant literary language and is used to caption paintings in the early temples. By the early 12th century Old Burmese replaces Mon in popularity. The Burmese had arrived at a confident expression both in literature and the visual arts, not to mention structural engineering. The principal architectural forms, monuments and periods will be described below.

We know little of kings and the political life and we know little of the extent and manner in which the empire was administered. It is curious that there are few monuments beyond the Pagan plain area but this does not necessarily mean that the city was highly populated. Rather as a centre of revenue collection it became a centre for religious expenditure. Beyond the walls and moat of the palace-city area were a number of village-like quarters solely occupied by a particular artisan group. Thus there were villages of wood carvers, brick makers or stucco workers. The inscriptions detail glebe lands and estates often far away that supported the maintenance of fabric

and human population in the vast collegiate-style monasteries. The dedication area itself possessed insufficient population to feed so vast a monastic community and it seems that much of the arable Irrawaddy valley was bonded into perpetuity in the service of these great establishments. In addition to distant estates such works of merit included the dedication of considerable support populations. In 1197 one donor gave 141 slaves solely to look after the oil lamps and rice offerings.

The Pagan Museum has an excellent collection of artifacts, but nearly all are religious — images, votive plaques and the like. There are few tools nor pots and pans; little evidence of lay life — whether artisan or courtier. Nor are there any weapons and instruments of war. Just like the kings the people left nothing other than their monuments behind.

If Buddhism was Pagan's glory it may also have been its downfall. Perhaps there was nothing left to dedicate — land and people were exhausted. Some scholars argue that the ecological consequences of so much brick baking — rendered the aptly named 'Dry Zone' arid. Some say Pagan was sacked by the Mongols in 1278, whilst others that the Mongols would never have wasted so valuable an asset, prefering tribute to torch. If the Mongols did not sack the city, who, in search of treasure, tunnelled into relic chambers and smashed many thousands of images open?

After Pagan

By 1300 there was a new force in the region, the Shan or Tai. They had yet to be pacified by Buddhism and were lusty for the spoils of a fat empire absorbed in religious preoccupations. They seized their chance in the political vacum left by the Mongol incursion, with a court decayed by intrigue and a land worn with pagoda building. It is most likely then that the temples of Pagan were broken open by treasure hunters as once lavishly monasteries and

colleges emptied of monks as glebe lands fell into decay. The Irrawaddy valley entered a 'dark age' of ethnic struggle between Burman, Shan and Mon for control. Power in Upper Burma came to be focused further up the river, around Mandalay, and Pagan was abandoned. Vestiges of art and architecture are few as power transferred from capital to capital, just as a general shifts camp.

Between the Fall of Pagan in 1287 and rise of new Burman empire at Toungoo in 1531 there were three main centers of control: Pinya, Sagaing and Ava ruled by Shan-Burman chieftenates. During this period of nearly two hundred and fifty years the Shans were converted to Buddhism and Burmese ways, marrying into the ancient line of King Anawratha. The period is marked by struggles between the Mon kingdom of Pegu in the South and the Burmese at Toungoo. The Mons had been absorbed into the Pagan empire in the 11th century and now re-surfaced, their language and culture in tact. By the 15th century reign of Dhammazedi, Pegu had emerged as the most active center of art and culture in the region. By contrast the Shan king Thohanbwa (1527-43) declared that "Burmese pagodas have nothing to do with religion... they are simply treasure chambers" and proceeded to pillage the Irrawaddy Valley.

The Toungoo Dynasty

Throughout this anarchic period the last pocket of Burmese civilisation remained at Toungoo which had established itself as a Burman chieftenate in 1280 and survived battered through the 'Dark Ages' of Burma's history. In the 16th century two remarkable kings emerged, Tabinshweti (1531-1752) and Bayinnaung (1551-81). During this reign the Burmese resestablished hegemony over the entire Irrawaddy Valley, bannishing the Shan to the hills where he remains to this day, and conquered the Mon kingdom of Pegu, defended by Portuguese condotierri. During this energetic period of military expansion, the country's borders were extended to encompass much of present day Thailand. At no point in the country's history, before or since, did the Burman control so much territory.

The new capital at Pegu was built upon the old Mon one and absorbed and embellished Mon architecture and culture rather than repressing it. Despite his gains, Tabinshweti, became an alcoholic under the influence of a Portugese libertine. He was eventually assasinated and thereupon joined the thirty-seven nats in the Burmese spirit pantheon. Following the supression of various rebellions, Bayinnaung, now in alliance with the Portugese, reconsolidated Tabinshweti's gains, and finally subdued the Shans. In 1569 his insatiable thirst for victory led to the annexation of the kingdom of Ayutthia. At its high point his army numbered 100,000 men and Pegu became a center of religion, art and patronage. Some of the earliest works of literature in the Burmese vernacular date from this golden age and it was then that Buddhist law was codified. The old Mon city was rebuilt with twenty gates named after each of the provinces he ruled. Pegu was then a port city, open to the world and its influences and Burma prospered. Pagodas were built across the empire and even the principal monuments of Chiang Mai remain the work of the Burmese Bayinnaung. The king became envolved in

the affairs of Ceylon, marrying into the royal line of Kandy and obtaining the sacred tooth relic for Burma. He treated with the Moghul emperor Akbar and on the point of invading Arakan died at the age of sixty-six leaving ninety-seven children.

Cœsar Frederick, a merchant of Venice described Bayinnaung after a visit to Pegu, "…in land, for people, dominions, gold and silver, he far exceeds the power of the Great Turk in treasure and strength." Yet today Pegu is something of disappointment and, though Bayinnnaung may have been mightier than any king of Pagan, he left little behind. Perhaps because Lower Burma has treble the rainfall of Pagan and his monumnets have been washed away. The fabled palace is now but a ditch and the pagodas of Pegu somewhat sundry. The Pagan empire represented a concentration of energy whilst the Toungoo a dissipation.

Bayinnaung's empire hinged more on his personality than adminstrative apparatus and soon after his death internicine squabbles resulted in an Arakanese sack of Pegu in 1600 and the rise of an independent Portugese state at Syriam under de Brito. The dynasty rallied, though, under Anaukpetlun and the Portugese were ousted in 1612. In 1635 Thalun relocated the capital to Ava, a months river journey away from the troublesome Portugese and far from the realities of the world outside. The Pegu river had silted up and designs on Ayutthiaoriginals abandoned. Despite turning his back on the outside world Thalun proved a judicious administrator, refroming the law and government and began a process of reconstruction in a land that had been severely depopulated by a near century of obsessive war with Siam. He dedicated numerous Buddhist works including the great Kaunghmudaw at Sagaing, that may still be seen today, and was a patron of literature.

For the remainder of the 17th and early part of 18th century, the Toungoo kings based now at Ava retained the

Delta and old Mon country, depopulated after the wars of the 16th cetntury. They controlled the ports and Irrawaddy highway, but otherwise Lower Burma was abandoned in all but name. During this period the interests of the Portugese was displaced in favour of firstly the French Compagnie des Indes (1688) and then the British East India Company (1709) who both established 'factories' at Syriam for general trading and ship building. By the 1740s, with the king of Ava was preoccupied with an invasion from Manipur, the Mons rose and took advantage, capturing Pegu, Prome and Toungoo — the principal cities of Lower Burma. The English withdrew from Syriam to their fort on Negrais Island on the Bassein river as the Mons, with their capital revived at Pegu, pushed northwards into Burman territory under Binnya Dala (1747-57). Upper Burma collapsed into a state of anarchy, overrun by Mons and dacoits, and in 1752 Ava was sacked.

The Konbaung Dynasty, 1752-1824

As the Mons sacked Ava and Upper Burma had all but fallen, the village headman of Shwebo, Alaunghpaya, built a stcokade, set up his standard and became the focus of Burman resistance. Political success followed military achievement, disparate and distant lords united under his leadership and the Mons were sent back down the river by which they came. Alaunghpaya was proclaimed king in 1752 with his capital at Shwebo and the Konbaung Dynasty was founded. The Konbaung were to rival Bayinnaung in territorial conquest and during this period the arts of Upper Burma flourished as its rich vestiges reveal today. However, it was under the Konbaung Dynasty that Burma for the first time in her history was to fall under a foreign yoke as the British Raj in three campaigns annexed her territory. Burma may have been invaded in the past by Mongol, Arakanese or Manipuri, but had never been administered by a foreign power, oscillating

between the grip of indigenous military rule and havoc of interregnum.

In 1755 Alaunghpaya captured Dagon from the Mon and renamed it Yangon or 'End of Strife' which was Anglicised by the British to Rangoon. Here Alaunghpaya came up against ship's of the East India Company, whose commander Jackson, together with the French who now controlled Syriam, had mistakenly sided with the Mons. The British fort at Negrais realised its error, as Alaunghpaya emerged as the dominant force in the region, and an envoy, Captain Baker, was despatched to Shwebo to treat with the new king:

"To the palace steps we were conducted by about twenty musketeers headed by a drum... I entered in the midst of a crowd of officers in their court dress, the king's two eldest sons being seated on carpets on either side of the throne where the king sat in state. Having paid my compliments on the knees, bowing the head three separate times he looked at me for some time and at length said 'How does your king do?' "

A deal was struck in which Negrais was ceded to the English who were allowed to trade duty free, in return the Company offered military assistance against the rebel lord of Tavoy and an annual present of cannon. In 1756 the French fortifications at Syriam were overwhelmed and the Italian bishop Nerini beheaded; a naval task force was despatched from Pondicherry in South India, who depended on Syriam for their ship building. This was captured together with its cargo of muskets, cannon and ball. Many of the French officers were given Burmese wives and served in Alaunghpaya's armies and when too old to serve retired to villages in the Shwebo area. This may well account for the aquiline features still found amongst certain locals in this township to this day.

Alaunghpaya showed little mercy in his subjugation of

the Mon country and as the Burmese slowly advanced they devastated and depopulated the land just as the Toungoo kings had done in the 16th century. Lower Burma with its great web of a delta was to revert once again to jungle and swamp until the British annexation of 1854.

The remainder of Alaunghpaya's reign was spent on the march: Manipur, the northern Shan States, and finally the age old Burmese obsession with Ayuthia, capital of Siam, resurfaced. Thus began the 5th seige of Ayuthhia where he was finally caught not by cavalry or cannon but by the rains and rampant dysentry. He died in the retreat. To prevent civil war his death was kept a secret and his corpse was carried in a curtained litter back up the river to be brought ashore at Kyaukmyaing and carried to Shwebo where his grave may still be seen.

Alaunghpaya's successors continued the process of empire building and consolidation. Ayutthia was beseiged once again for the 6th time in 300 years in 1767 by Hsinbyushin. In consequence much of Siam was devestated, her population either decapitated or enslaved and relocated to repopulate areas of Burma, themselves depopulated from perennial warfare. Nothing was a match for the bellicose Burmese. Even the might of Manchu China was tested and forced to treat with Ava on Ava's terms. The greatness of Bayinnaung had returned, and in 1784 Bodawhpaya conquered Arakan completing the Burmese dream of a unified empire. It is thus no surprise that the Burmese were disdainfull of foreign envoys. As one Burmese minister told an English suitor, "You do not realise. We have never yet met the race that can withstand us."

These were brutal times; successive kings inaugurated their reigns with the 'Massacre of Kinsman' — a tradition that ensured an unopposed succession. Misrule would spark rebellions amongst subject peoples which would in turn be thwarted with a violence that was shocking even

by the standards of the 18th century. It is testimony to the wealth of Burma that despite incessant demands on the population for soldiery, more often lost from mistreatment than battle, the country remained rich and fertile. Abundant in nearly everything, the one resource they lacked was manpower. The reason why was war.

King Bodawhpaya

Bodawhpaya ruled for thirty-seven years — a long time for a Burmese king and though maintaining the Konbaung martial tradition his regin marked a new epoch in cultural activity. In 1783 he moved his capital to Amarapura where the walls and moat are still evident. Like the Pagan kings of old the Konbaung kings celebrated their conquests with pagodas but Bodawhpaya took this further and was anxious to make his mark. The Mingun pagoda, though incomplete and torn asunder by an earthquake, remains to this day the world's largest pile of brick. When it reached the height of 500 feet a prophecy arose "the pagoda is finished and the great country ruined". This was the exact prophecy that had doomed Narathihapate on the completion of the Mingalazedi pagoda at Pagan so Bodawhpaya halted the work to avoid the Narathihapate's fate. Despite Bodawhpaya's excesses in both war and in peace the arts prospered during his reign — architecture was profuse and flamboyant and poetry flourished. The king reformed the law and reorganised the religious order and its property. Diplomatic missions were exchanged with China for the first time in the Konbaung's brilliant, but bloody dynasty and Chinese artistic influences are evident in the mural painting and stucco decoration of this period.

The First Anglo Burmese War 1924-25

Unlike the earlier Toungoo kings, the Konbaung kings found themselves under some scrutiny and as excess heaped upon excess world opinion weighed against them. Though shut away far from oceans and free trade news of

their wealth and extravagance, tyranny and misruled seeped out. Still to this day, along with fire, water, thieves and malevolent persons, the Burmese classify governmet as on of the Five Evils. The Konbaung were oblivious to world opinion for they were the centre of the world and invincible. In 1813 King Bagyidaw decided to conquer Assam and came up against British India. In 1819 over 30,000 Assamese were relocated into Burma and depositions of refugees from that period, describing the Burmese army's disregard for human rights and brutal excesses, seem familiar to those who follow the contemporary scene today. Matters escalated and in 1823 Burmese soldiers attacked a British frontier post and invaded British India sparking off the first Anglo Burmese War. Up till then successive viceroys had made allowances for the mentality of the Burmese court and despite rebuff and insult had adopted a non confrontational approach. But now the Burmese had taken matters into their own hands — they sought the riches of Calcutta. The British were said to be a cowardly nation of merchants who for thirty years had politely stood down when challenged. Their soldiers were but weakly Indian sepoys — no match for their martial Burmese led by the great strategist Mahabandula. Whilst Mahabandula lurked in Assam the British landed transports of infantry at Rangoon and, despite set backs, by 1825 Mahabandula was dead and by the Treaty of Yandabo Tennasserim and Arakan ceded.

The Second Anglo Burmese War, 1852 and the Irrawaddy Flotilla

Bagyidaw withdrew into a state of melancholy that turned to madness. By the 1830s government had all but broken down as dacoity enveloped the country with village pitted against village; the Irrawaddy became unnavigable through piracy. In 1837 the Tharrawaddy Prince rebelled and took power and the court was moved back to Amarapura again. He refused to honour the treaty with

the British and relations worsened. In 1854 the Pagan Prince in turn rebelled and seized power from his unstable father but he proved more vicious still.

The second war's causes differed from the first as on this occasion there was no Burmese invasion of British territory, rather the war was about face — in this case British face. The Burmese government came to neglect the terms of the Treaty of Yandabo and her port governors set about harassing British merchants. An anti-British party at court resulted in the appointment of a new Rangoon Governor who provoked Commodore Lambert into naval action. He became known as the 'combustible commodore' and was reprimanded by Dalhousie, the Governor of India. War was inevitable and in 1852 the Province of Pegu or Lower Burma was annexed.

The Irrawaddy Flotilla

Unlike the first war, when the British were caught out by the monsoon, this war was a highly organised affair. Preparations in India were extensive and included the transfer of steam paddle ships of the Bengal Marine for troop transportation on the Irrawaddy. These were officered by British and crewed by lascars. Taking advantage of divisions in the court the flotilla advanced rapidly up the river capturing Prome and then the prized Myédé forests just above Thayetmyo. The British had never intended to hack off so large a chunk of territory, the original plan was to capture and hold Martaban, Rangoon and Bassein — the important southern ports. However, the Province of Pegu, rendered defenseless by a court in turmoil, with its forests and rich resources was too great a spoil. Interestingly the commander of the naval operations, who died of illness on the river, was one Rear-Admiral Austen, brother of Jane Austen. Meanwhile at Amarapura Pagan Min was deposed by Mindon who promptly negotiated a treaty with the British.

In 1864 the Governor of British Burma, Arthur Phayre

decided to privatise the flotilla. After the cesation of hostilities it had been assigned to peace time duties and Todd, Findlay & Co, a Scots firm based in Rangoon, purchased the four steamers and three flats. As a sweetener the government guaranteed mail contracts but given the poor condition of the vessels Todd, Findlay had nothing but trouble with them. However the potential was realised and in 1865 a company was formed in Glasgow with Paddy Hendersons the shipping line, who were already established in first Moulmein and then Rangoon as a port of call on their New Zealand runs, and Denny's of Dunbarton the shipbuilders. This partnership of merchants, shippers and ship builders was to offer a combined expertise and experience that gave the company an entrepreneurial thrust linked to a grasp of technology.

By the late 1860s it proved necessary to replace the old government steamers and new vessels were built on the Clyde, dismantled and shipped out for reconstruction in Rangoon. It took some years and much trial and error, though, before the company perfected a design suited to the difficult conditions of the Irrawaddy with its perilous shallows. By 1872 the fleet comprised of eight new steamers and twelve flats. Services operated between Rangoon and Prome in British Burma, in Royal Burma up to Mandalay, and by 1869 Bhamo. The company realised the importance of the China trade and saw the importance of a river link to South West China through Burma. Though King Mindon was said to have moved capital to Mandalay from Ava in 1855 out of irritation at the sound of passing steamer's whistles, and despite efforts to establish a flotilla of his own, the company prospered in Royal Burma thanks to the close relationship between the company agent, Dr Clement Williams, and the king.

King Mindon

Burma now posessed a king of some sagacity. A devout Buddhist and patron of the arts Mindon pursued a concili-

tory policy towards the British. Mindon was intelligent enough to realise that Burma needed peace to reconstruct his country and unlike his predecessors he had learnt the hard way that the British were to be treated with, not insulted. In 1855 Arthur Phayre the Governor of Lower Burma conducted a mission to the Court of Ava and Henry Yule's Narrative forms a fascinating compendium of information on Royal Burma.

Rangoon quickly grew into the capital of Lower Burma replacing Moulmein as the main mercantile and port center. Gradually Lower Burma became rich and prosperous from both trade, with its own markets and resources and acting as the gateway for Upper Burma. Agriculture flourished as rich paddy lands were reclaimed from jungle.

At the same time Royal Burma, with its magnificent new capital founded in 1855 at Mandalay, prospered under the reforming hand of Mindon Min. A commercial treaty with the British in 1863 allowed the Irrawaddy Flotilla, still in the hands of the Rangoon government, access. The British Resident Dr Clement Williams pioneered the river by steam as far north as Bhamo anxious to explore the possibilities of a trade link to China. On his retirement from service Williams stayed on as Company Agent and 1868 the company began a regular Rangoon Mandalay steamer service. Mindon introduced coinage and reformed administration with proper salaried officials rather than feudal 'town eaters'. Mindon cleverly played off British against French interests and in 1872 despatched the Kinwun Mingyi as Burma's first ambassador to London and Paris.

King Thibaw and the Third Anglo Burmese War of 1885

In 1878 Mindon died without appointing a successor and in a palace coup power was seized by the Kinwun Mingyi who in alliance with the chief queen crowned a puppet-to-be, Thibaw. The Kinwun did not recknon on Thibaw's

wife Supayarlat who rapidly established dominance over the young king. The 'Massacre of the Kinsmen' — that old Burmese institution — was revived and over eighty relatives were put to death by the traditional mode for members of the royal family. They were places in velvet sacks and clubbed to death.

Relations with the British took an immediate turn for he worse. The old Manipur border problem resurfaced, exhortion and maladministration led to a refugee influx into Lower Burma. To cap it all, Thibaw meddled with the French upseting his father's balance and jeopardising British commercial arrangements. Diplomacy was not helped by the fact that the Government of India prohibited its envoys from taking off their shoes when in the royal presence. The 'shoe question', as it became known, had never been a stumbling block before but as India became an empire it was deemed demeaning for her emissaries to so humble themselves. A Burmese embassy lingered in Paris threatening to upset the balance of power in Indo-China and moreover the businesss lobby feered that the French would be first into China and seize the rich economic pickings before them. In 1879 the siituation in Mandalay became so tense that in mid stream an Irrawaddy Flotilla steamer was kept under full steam in case of an emergency evacuation. The Chamber's of Commerce at home clamoured for annexation and in 1885 the Burmese government fined the Bombay Burmah Trading Corporation a ridiculously large sum over a trumped up charge. The British had had enough and in 1885 war was declared.

As with the second war this was to be a river war and the Irrawaddy Flotilla, in private hands since 1864, was seconded to carry troops once again. Steamers and flats were hired from the government for troop carrying purposes escorted by armed steam launches. The flats were converted into floating barracks and there was even a hospital ship. Contemporary etchings from the Illustrated

London News or Graphic show the flotilla proceeding up stream, a flat, heavily curtained to keep out the sun, lashed either side of a steamer, and field guns fastened to the bows. The viceroy, Lord Dufferin, despatched General Prendergast in command of the Burm Field Force of 10,000 men. As with the second war the British preparations were extensive. An invasion plan had been devised at India Army headquarters several years earlier and at Dum-Dum replicas of Burmese stockades had been constructed for training purposes. Dufferin planned a swift almost surgical strike on the 'Golden City' ordering "If your occupation of the capital of Upper Burma could be effected in a bloodless manner, it would be extremely creditable for you and far more advantageous than to the ultimate aims of the government than any number of victorious encounters in the field". They were so organised that the Swiss scholar Forchammer was asked to draw up lists of the royal and monastic libraries to ensure that they were not damaged during the occupation.

Indeed the war was near bloodless. The flotilla assembled at the frontier town of Thayetmyo and advanced upstream on the Burmese forts of Minhla and Gwechaung. Mindon, ever sensible to the dangers of invasion had employed Italian military engineers in the construction of fortifications. These were formidable and guarded a narrow stretch of the river to the north of the border. Gwechaung had a garrison of 1,700 men but with war iminent reinforcements several thousand strong had taken up position in the area. Unfortunately Thibaw's plans fell into enemy hands. Two Italian engineers, Camotta and Molinari, on board a royal ship were surprised by the IF ships Irrawaddy and Kathleen and fled leaving their diaries and plans. They had intended to scuttle a specially prepared flat in the narrow channel thereby preventing the Flotilla's advance. Prenderghast proceeded to bombard the Gwechaung fort from the Irrawaddy and meanwhile sent infantry round the back of the hill. This most obvious of

tactics took the Burmese wholely by surprise — they and their guns were on the river side and the fort soon capitulated. On the opposite bank the Burmese made a brave stand and fighting conditions were more tricky. Three British sepoys were lost to the Burman's one hundred dead.

The river was now wide open and the flotilla proceeded to Mandalay where without struggle in early 1886 the recaltriant King Thibaw was deposed and, together with Supayarlat his queen, was exiled to an insalubrious corner of India.

Royal Burma and British Burma

To this day Burma has never got over being a British colony and one tacked as a lesser appenage onto the Indian Empire. After three short sharp campaigns in 1824, 1855 and 1885 the Kingdom of Ava as it was then known was annexed. Successive dynasties with their capitals, situated far from the sea up the mighty Irrawaddy, had tended to be isolated from the cares of the world. By the 19th century the world's oceans were plied in the name of 'free trade' whilst Burma proved protectionalist and suspicious of foreign entreaties to open its rivers. The Glasgow and Manchester chambers of commerce demanded that she send downstream teak and rubies and receive upstream corrugated iron and Singer sewing machines. Burma was stubborn and unyielding and her kings, earthly manifestations of Hindu deities incarnate in this world to protect the great Buddhist faith, convinced of their invulnerable superiority. They inhabited 'forbidden cities' styled the 'Centre of the Universe' and men had to take their shoes off and crawl before them. Power was total and human rights unheard off. On accession it was common for the new king to execute all rival claimants, including brothers and half brothers. They knew nothing of the technical revolution in Europe let alone the might of the neighbouring Indian Raj and were deeply insulted

when British envoys would not adhere to courtly etiquette and take off their shoes in the king's presence. A clashing of cultures led to a clashing of empires. By 1885 in Britain lobbiests, whether potential investos anxious to exploit this rich market or concerned persons appalled at the Burmese disregard for human rights, persuaded Lord Randolph Churchill to make a final annexation.

For the fiirst time in several hundred years, if ever, the Burmese discovered the joys of living in a country in which government existed to serve the people rather than obstruct the people for its own power-obsessed ends. Trade flowed freely and this industrious race prospered. Burma rapidly grew to become one of the richest lands in Asia and its new capital Rangoon became known as the 'Pearl of the Orient'.

A middle class elite, educated either in Egland or India or in English at the new Rangoon University, had developed by the 1930s. As with the Congress Movement in India the sophisticated, Westernised younger generation only naturally sought Independence from the British whom they came to see as evil Imperialists. Overtures were made to the Japanese, a fellow Asian people who promised freedom from Western Imperialism and in 1942 revolutionary Burmese students assisted the Japanese in their invasion. However they soon found that the Japanese were far harsher masters than the British ever were. Aung San the student leader approached the Britsh and in return for a guarantee of independence after the war now assisted the allies in their reconquest of Burma. Tragically General Aung San and his cabinet were all assasinated in 1946 just before the handing over of power.

The Irrawaddy Flotilla Company and British Burma

We have seen how in telling the story of British expansion into Burma it has been impossible to ignore the significant role of the flotilla. For the following sixty years till the Japanese invasion of 1942 again the story of Burma, and

her rise to wealth and economic supremacy amongst the Asian nations, is intertwined with the operations and activities of the Irrawaddy Flotilla Company. Scots guile was quick to realise that Burma was a land of rivers and even with the completion of roads and railways the river remained the key to the riches of Burma. By the 1920s the fleet consisted of 622 units (267 powered) from the magnificent Siam class of 326 feet long (the same length as the height of the Shwedagon) and licenced to carry 4,000 passengers to pilot craft and tug boats. In a normal year the compay carried eight million passengers without loss of life and 1.25 million tons of cargo. Irrwaddy vessels tended to have side paddles and would tow two flats, each lashed to either side. On the Chindwin, which was pioneered during Thibaw's reign by company steam launch in 1875, a radical new design was created by Denny's to cope with the shallow conditions. To balance the displacement the paddle was situated in the stern and the boiler in the bow. This sternwheeler type would draw only 2.5 feet of water and as the Chindwin valley was wooded regular fueling stations were set up so the vessels did not need to burden itself. The larger company ships had Scots masters and engineers and lascar crews, the lesser ones were entirely Chittagonian. The company had 200 expats based in Burma and a local staff of 11,000. Head office was in Glasgow but in these pleasant phoneless and faxless days regional 'Assistants' were autonomous. There was one telegram a month from Rangoon to Glasgow and that consisted of one line only — the total takings!

In addition to passenger and cargo transport the company operated a fleet of oil barges to carry crude oil from the Chauk area to the Syriam oil refinery for the Burmah Oil Company. Paddy was carried for Steel Brothers on specially designed paddy boats and timber for the Burmah Bombay Corporation. The company pamphlet of 1935 describes produce carried:

" — great bales of cotton, bags of rice, blocks of jade, lacquerware from Pagan, silk, tamarind, elephants sometimes, woven mats, maize, jaggery, bullocks, marble Buddhas, oilcake, tobacco, timber. Upward bound will be found various imports from Europe, motor cars, corrugated iron, condensed milk, matches, aluminium ware, sewing machines, piece goods, soap, cigarettes, cement and whisky. Every class of goods that enters or leaves Burma finds its way onto an Irrawaddy boat."

In 1934 the Irrawaddy Flotilla & Airways was set up offering scheduled services and charters — including an unusual service for devout Buddhists whereby an aircraft would encircle the Magwe pagoda seven times. The passing of company steamers was part of river life and when the company changed steamer design and removed a funnel there was an outcry amongst the Burmese villagers.

The Irrawaddy is an untamable river — there are neither locks nor weirs to control the level as on the Missisipi or Nile — and in the monsoon the water level can rise 50 feet in some places. Nor are there charts, for the sands shift with such rapidity that they would be out of date before the ink is dry. Instead, the company operated its fleet safely and efficiently through the experience of her masters and pilots and a clever and inexpensive system of bamboo marker buoys. Buoy Boats in charge of beats constantly checked and marked the channels with buoys and the bearings with marker posts on the river banks. If a captain went aground he had to stay with his vessel, in the case of the Momein in 1919 for a whole year. In 1877 the Kha Byoo was caught in a whirlpool in the second defile between Katha and Bhamo. She spent three days spinning in a circle before getting free and the captain's hair turned white.

The captain's lived on the bridge and many of the river features were named after incidents they experienced at their hands, thus there was 'Becketts's Bluff' or

'MacFarlane's folly. Scott O'Connor again best captures their proud commands:

"Some of the steamers that come this way are of the largest size; mailers on their way from Mandalay; cargo boats with flats in tow, laden with produce of the land; and when they come round the bend into full view of Maubin, the great stream shrinks and looks strangely small, as if it were being overcome by a monster from another world. Three hundred feet they are in length, these steamers with flats in tow, half as wide, and they forge imperiously ahead as if all space belonged to them, and swing round and roar out of their anchor chains, while the lascars leap and the skipper's white face gleams in the heavy shadows by the wheel — the face of a man in command.

And when you see this wonderful spectacle for the first time, you step on board this great boat expecting to find an imperious man with eyes alight with power, and the consciousness of power, and the knowledge that he is playing a great part. But you are disappointed, for you find a plain man, very simple in his habits and ways with weariness written about the corners of his red eyes. Ah! They know their work, these men.... And I say nothing of the Clydesmen who rule the throbbing engines..."

The story of the Irrawaddy Flotilla is a story of Scottish-Burmese partnership. As the yards on the Clyde where these great ships were built stand silent so too do the yards of the Rangoon River where they were once reassembled. In the first part of this century two dissimilar nations established a rapport and shared a prodidgeous wealth that neither country had known before or since. The demise of the flotilla was perhaps the saddest day of British merchant marine history, when else have six hundred ships been lost in one fell swoop. That swoop was neither natural disastor nor enemy action but at the hands

of the company's own officers. In 1942 before the oncoming Imperial Japanese Army, following the evacuation of Rangoon and escape to the upper river, they gunned holes in the great ships hulls rather than let them fall into enemy hands. It was called an 'Act of Denial'.

Independence

Britain now had a Labour government anxious, for doctrinal and fiscal reasons, to divest itself of now unwanted colonies. Many argue that the ongoing crisis of Burmese history dates from Britain's hasty withdrawal coupled with the loss of the country's most gifted leaders martyred together with Aung San. The interests of the Karens and other ethnic minorities were not safeguarded in the new constitution and the Burmese refused to join the British Commonwealth. The Burmese are a fiercely proud people and whilst taking for granted the economic benefits that came with colonialism they remained bitter with their former masters.

The late 1940s and early 1950s were a turbulent period in which the Rangoon government of U Nu were faced with ethnic rebellion on the part of the Karens, political disunity with the Burma Communist Party taking to the hills and border incursions by the retreating Kuomintang. Meanwhile socialist policies and nationalisations of foreign companies, starting with the Irrawaddy Flotilla Company in 1947, discouraged investors and contributed to economic decay in these post war years. Elections were finally held in 1954 and there followed a brief period of democracy and civilian rule. This was period of economic uncertainty and increasingly U Nu, a devout Buddhist, turned to religious activity as a solution to the country's woes. Buddhism was declared the 'state religion' which led to the Kachin, who are fervent Christians, taking up arms against Rangoon.

General Ne Win and the Socialist Period

With war on several fronts, the Burma Army under the

command of General Ne Win increased its autonomy in the provinces and power base in the capital. In 1958, with the politicians squabbling oblivious to the country's state, Ne Win seized power to restore order as civil rule became increasingly impotent. In 1959 Ne Win returned power to the elected government of U Nu. However against a background of further disorder the General seized power again in 1962.

General Ne Win remained in power till 1988 and during this period the character of the country changed markedly. Once the envy of all Asia, with a cosmoplitain educated middle class, Burma in 1989 was awarded 'Poorest Nation Status' by the United Nations. From 'Rice Bowl of Asia' she became a basket case. Ne Win's dictatorship styled itself as Socialist as was the trend amongst military regimes then. However many of the policies were inherited from the earlier democratic period. Xenophobic nationalisations against foreign companies, a racial bias aggravated by an unpleasant Buddhist chauvinsim, confrontations with the hill tribes all dated from the U Nu period. Some might argue that the collapse of Burma's once rich economy was the consequence of the Second World War followed by disasterous post-Independence pollicies during the 1950s. However, under Ne Win xenaphobia resulted in the expulsion of the Indian and Chinese mercantile elites and nationalisation of all remaining foreign companies. Power was concentrated on the General alone and a stiffling bureaucracy. With decision makers rendered indecisive through fear, corruption swamped a country in which government existed to serve itself and not the country. The replacement of private enterprise by state controlled co-operatives, not to mention the expulsion of her entrepreneurial class, led to a decay and inertia that has left Burma several decades behind Asean neighbours like Thailand and Malaysia. During this period Rangoon controlled only the main river valleys and various insurgent armies dominated the vast tracts of highland Burma. It

was then that Shan warlords based in the infamous Golden Triangle turned Burma into the largest producer of heroin in the world. Meanwhile the Communist rebels were supported from across the border by the Chinese.

Few foreigners were allowed in and even fewer Burmese allowed out. Burma became the hermit of Asia and, with its low profile, human rights abuses could flourish unreported in the Western media. In the horseshoe of hills around the Irrawaddy valley wars were won and lost with not a word in the outside press. Yet despite the repression and disrespect for people's economic and personal freedoms Burma enjoyed pleasant diplomatic relations with the world at large. Surrounded by six countries with political colours that varied from the largest democracy in the world (India) to the largest communist country in the world (China), with devestating international conflict in former French Indo-China, General Ne Win steered a non-aligned course, rather like his contemporary Martial Tito in former Yugoslavia. General Ne Win made a number of private visits to Europe and was on excellent terms with the British royal family, enjoying close relations with Viscount Mountbatten of Burma. In 1987, on the eve of the Burmese holocaust, the Princess Royal made a state visit.

By the mid-80s Ne Win's aspirations for a national self-sufficency were crumbling in the face of hyper inflation and a rampant black economy, the country was impoverished and totally dependant on foreign aid. Aid in turn led to further corruption and decay — state-of-the-art factories would be donated but never operated simply because no one dared take the decision to hook up the power supply. Machinery would rust in customs compounds as no one could work out how to untie the tangles of red tape and get th em out. Two demonaterisations aimed at controling the flow of black money resulted in the bulk of the population loosing their life savings.

In this environment human rights were unheard of and their abuse unreported. Burma was out of bounds to

foreigners, particularly journalists. An inept, but vast, bureaucracy and elaborate party protocols ensured that total power was concentrated in the General alone. Despite this, Ne Win, who pursued a non-aligned foreign policy, not unlike Martial Tito in Yugoslavia, enjoyed cordial relations with the West and even the British royal family. In 1987 the Princess Royal paid a state visit to Burma.

The Events of 1988

In 1988, following monetary collapse and in the face of shattering poverty the people had had enough and took to the streets in a series of mass demonstrations. The army knew only one response — bullets. Despite their brutality the government were eventually rendered impotent by this tide of popular anger — even civil servants and sections of the military took to the streets in disgust. The party chairman General Ne Win resigned from politics and publicly admitted that mistakes had been made and that socialism did not work. Puppet governments came and went whilst vigilantes policed the streets. In Mandalay monks took over the civil administration of the city, directing the traffic and patrolling the back streets to prevent looting and the breakdown of order. At the same time government agents attempted to ferment disorder — lunatics were released from asylums and convicts from prisons, water supplies poisoned and there were incidents of arson.

Despite this the people were jubilant with their new found freedoms and unanimously looked to one person for guidance — Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. By August 1988 she began to make her first public appearances and her plain talking and obvious moral integrity quickly won the people's hearts and minds. She had spent most of her life outside Burma; but this was a bonus — here was someone uncorrupted by the mire of the socialist period.

Meanwhile, through the long months of people's

power, as the nation exhausted itself with revolutionary celebration, the troops remained locked in their barracks. By nature conservative, older people began to fear that disorder would increase. Into this vacuum the army moved with swiftness and surprise. On the 18 September martial law was declared, demonstrators were mercilessly gunned down and reprisals seemed endless. Burma had entered her darkest moment since the Japanese occupation of 1942. Estimates of the death toll vary dramatically: from the governments figure of a few hundred to the activists' figure of 10,000. The terrible truth may be somewhere in between.

There followed a period of human rights violation with thousands of arrests and imprisonment without trial. The new leaders came from a younger generation of army officers who styled their junta the State Law and Order Restoration Council with the unfortunate acronym Slorc under the command of General Saw Maung.

Slorc declared an end to the socialist policies of the past three decades and dismantled the vast party structure that employed as many people as the civil service itself. A free market economy was proclaimed and the door opened to a free market economy though at that time few investors dared venture through it. Aid was suspended and only the Thais, who in 1988 also had a military government, would trade with Slorc. (Having cut down their own forests they vied for Burma's.) The Slorc were told by the international community that aid and trade would resume only if they held free and fair elections. This they did, and in 1990 Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's party the National League for Democracy won a landslide victory. However, Slorc refused to hand over power to the victorious NLD. Some say that they were so out of touch that they actually thought that their own party would win. During the 1989 campaign the forthright Daw Aung San Suu Kyi proceeded to do the unthinkable and publicly criticised

General Ne Win. This was too much for the Slorc and she was placed under house arrest.

'Opening Up'

By 1992 the character of Slorc changed markedly for the better. General Saw Maung, rumoured to have gone insane, was allowed to retire and no new chairman was appointed. Instead the curious arrangement of a Secretary One and a Secretary Two and a Senior General emerged. There was, and remains, no clear leader and some say that whilst General Ne Win remains alive none of his former 'disciples' dare to take the reins. The charismatic Secretary One, General Khin Nyunt, has adopted a high profile and acts as a front man for the committee. It would appear that Burma is ruled by committee, an inner conclave of generals, of differing background and ideas, who must be in mutual agreement before a decision can be made. This may well be the reason for the present political impasse.

The main result of the junta's reorganisation in 1992 was a general liberalisation. The curfew was abolished and over 2,000 political detainees released. The Thais were ousted and in to their place the Chinese stepped in, happy to supply the arms that a moralistic West would not. Business conditions improved and investment was encouraged with tax breaks and other incentives. The West was slow to realise the change in Burma but her sharper Asean neighbours were not to miss an opportunity and planes were soon packed with dark suited businessmen heading in from Singapore, Seoul, Taipei and Kuala Lumpur. The Tigers were in and a cub born. Burma's cities, ports and border points boomed for the first time since before the War. Cars replaced trishaws and grim concrete blocks colonial mansions. This was progress. The Slorc were bent on making Rangoon 'modern' like Singapore — unfortunately they will end up with a backstreets Bangkok. It was sad that the West were not there,

not just to profit, but perhaps to prod the Burmese into getting their miracle right.

By the mid-nineties the holocaust of 1988 was, if not forgiven, at least forgotten. Ordinary Burmese were prospering and with the prospect of improvement recent evils seemed to fade from memory. Passports were available and Burmese could come and go returning with ideas and ideals from the outside world. Long term exiles returned to start businesses and bring home rare expertise. Rangoon's foreign expatriate community had grown from a tiny diplomatic corps to the point where house rents were higher than in London. The fear that one found in 1989 or 1990 seemed to have dissipated as people were busy 'doing business'.

With a relaxation of trade restrictions previously unavailable imported goods appeared in the markets and there is no doubt that the quality of life improved for many Burmese. The decrepit infrastructure was upgraded: new buses carried people and goods to markets along new roads; electric pumps saved women hours of carrying water; improved rolling stock brought cities closer; new aircraft landed on new airports; piped water and sewage systems were installed in Rangoon and Mandalay; a telephone network with IDD lines introduced — there were even cell phones for the new 'yuppy' class — and Burma was at last wired to the world. These were not just cosmetic changes but fundamental improvements and managed without a cent of aid. Improved infrastructure and communications will greatly assist the Burmese people in the eventual transition to democracy.

Perhaps the greatest success story was the pacification of Burma in most cases by non violent means. Between Independence in 1947 and the late 80s Rangoon had fought several campaigns on several fronts which rapidly depleted the country's resources. Firstly the communist rank and file mutinied, and the predominantly Wa hillmen went over to the Slorc. The Kachin Independence Army

likewise tired of perennial war, and perhaps wary of the Tatmadaw's new strength, doubled in size and armed with new Chinese guns,treated with Rangoon. Over 13 former insurgent groups have now 'come in'. The Karens, after decades of stalemate, were forced from their Free State capital Mannerplaw. There followed a split between the Buddhist Karens, who went over to the Slorc, and the Christians who are at present negotiating for peace. This year Slorc came to pragmatic, if cynical, terms with Khun Sa, the notorious Shan opium king, ending decades of war and hopefully the flow of opium.

Slorc congratulated themselves on their achievements. For the first time since the British period Rangoon controlled much of Burma and the trains ran on time. However, such self congratulation was dampened by the one thorn in their side — Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. Whilst they were busy rebuilding their country and trying to improve their image the West harangued them over human rights issues and the continued house arrest of the pro-democracy leader. As they boasted their improvements Slorc sought foreign friends, but the only olive branch came from China. In 1994 under pressure from the Japanese investment lobby they released Daw Suu Kyi from detention. This proved a cynical move, on the part of both the Japanese and Slorc; it opened the gate for Japanese investment but it did not lead to any conclusive dialogue between Daw Suu Kyi and the generals. Since then Daw Suu Kyi has been able to hold weekend rallies outside her house, showing the world that the flame of democracy in Burma is still alight. Such rallies would have been unthinkable in the dark days of Slorc's early years. So long as the present impasse between Daw Suu Kyi and the generals continues, western investors will shy away. Meanwhile Burma has now been admitted to ASEAN which many analyist believe will be good for Burma's growing economy and prospects fora better future.

" — the greatest potential wealth of Burma must lie in her people, the men, women and children... Remember also the inventive genius of the people which can be trained and developed and made use of for the benefit of the country."

Mountbatten of Burma, 1948

Part Two - Culture

Buddhism

"— a Burman's ideas of this world are dominated by his religion. His religion says to him 'consider your own soul, that is the main thing'. His religion says to him 'the aim of every man should be happiness'. These are the fundamental parts of his belief; these he learns from childhood: they are born in him."

H FIELDING HALL *The Soul of a People*. 1898

To understand a little of Buddhism is a key to an understanding of Burma. Wherever one turns in lowland Burma one is surrounded by the the activities, ancient and modern, of this all pervasive faith. From the 3,000 'lost' temples still standing at Pagan to the 10,000 'living' monks of Mandalay, Buddhism is an active religion playing a part in each day of each Buddhist Burmese's life.

Buddhism is one of the great world religions extending from parts of Russia in the west to Japan in the east, Sri Lanka in the south and Korea to the north. Originally the religion extended over a far greater area including Afghanistan, the Indian sub-continent and parts of modern Indonesia. Unlike Judaicism, Christianity and Islam, Buddhism is not a monotheistic religion. Unlike Hinduism it does not teach that salvation can be attained through the intercession of any one god belonging to a pantheon. Buddhism is quite unlike the other world faiths.

Bodawin — the Life and Teachings of the Buddha
Whether in the paintings and sculpture contained in the temples at Pagan or woodcarvings of later periods, the bo-

dawin or life of the Buddha is the most important story portrayed in Burmese Buddhist art.

The Buddha, which means 'enlightened one', was not a god in the Judeo-Christian sense. Great teacher, prophet, even 'superman', he was born in the Himalayan kindom of Sakya as the son of the king Sudhoddana at around 500 BC. India then was a collection of Hindu states, often at war with each other, with a rigid caste system. At birth the Buddha exhibited the various marks of a superman. Such marks indicate that he was destined to be either a world emperor or world teacher. The king feared that his son and heir might adopt the latter role of world teacher renouncing his royal responsibilities, so the prince was confined to the palace leading a life of pampered luxury. However as he entered manhood the prince grew bored of such riches and made various excursions from the palace to the real world beyond. There in various incidents he encountered for the first time the nature of human suffering: an old man, a sick man, and a dead man. This lead him to renounce the courtly life andby night he escaped on his favourie steed, fled to a forest where he discarded his royal robes and cut off his long hair.

There followed a period of extreme asceticism in which the Buddha sought truth through a course of extreme self deprivation. Nearly dying of hunger and realising that self mortification was as vain and self indulgent as the decadent luxury of the palace he rejected this course and accepted a meal from an alms giver. Thus he discovered the 'middle way'. The Buddha's fellow ascetics abandoned him for this apparent weakness. Alone and revived by his meal the Buddha sat beneath the sacred bodhi tree and meditated through the night of a full moon. During the course of this meditation the Buddha was tempted by the Buddhist devil Mara and conquering this 'attack' went on to discover certain truths or realisations as to the human condition — the dharma or 'sacred law'. This was the 'Enlightenment' portrayed in Buddhist art with the

Lord touching the earth with one hand whilst the other remains in his lap in the meditation gesture. This bhumisparsamudrs symbolises the moment when the Buddha called the earth to witness his supreme moment of enlightenment.

The Buddha then returned to the world of men and reunited with his former disciples sat down in the Deer Park at Sarnath to expound the dharma. There followed a dry and numerically listed system designed to aid man in his quest for enlightenment:

Noble Eightfold Path — contains eight 'rights', the first four conditioning morality & lifestyle, right — understanding, speech, action, livelihood; the second four guiding spiritual and intellectual development, right — effort, mindfulness, concentration, thoughts.

Four Noble Truths

1) life is suffering
2) cause of suffering is desire
3) to eliminate desire results in the elimination of suffering
4) suffering may be eliminated by the Noble Eightfold Path

The Five Precepts

1) not to take life
2) not to steal
3) not to lust
4) not to tell lies
5) not to consume intoxicating substences

The Buddha was a pragmatic teacher and not a dogmatic prophet. He could be quite flexible at times and was not above changing his mind in the face of good reason or logic. Thus when he refused to ordain women into the movement, arguing that they would be a distraction to the

monks, the disciple Ananda outwitted him in arguement and the Buddha changed his stance. Though revolutionary, the movement attracted patronage and was particularly favoured by the merchant class who offered gardens for monastery building. This is just the case in Burma today where surplus profit is invested for spiritual ends in the dedication of pagodas, monasteries or other religious works.

The Establishment of Buddhism

The Buddha's movement quickly expanded and gained both popularity and patronage. For its time the religion may be seen to be revolutionary in two senses. Firstly, there was a clear rejection of the caste system and the Buddha taught that all mankind could be enlightened. Unlike contemporary Hinduism the religion was exoteric, not esoteric. Secondly, ther was a rejection of 'philosophy for the sake of philosophy'. Here was a clear, straightforward system, with a practical middle way lifestyle, that any body could follow.

Buddhism was to eventually spread across India and by the time of the Emperor Asoka (3rd century BC), who unified India for the first and last time till the British Raj, it had become the main religion displacing the Hindu sects. From India the faith was to spread in two directions. Southwards and across the Indian Ocean first to Sri Lanka and then on to South-East Asia where the first Buddhist centres were in the port cities of the Mon people who lived in the south of Burma and Thailand and thence on to maritime South-East Asia (Java and Sumatra) and inland to Vietnam, Cambodia and Upper Burma. The other direction Buddhism spread to was northwards across the Himalayas into Tibet, China and eventually north-east Asia (Japan, Korea, etc.). By the time of the rise of Pagan in the 11th century Buddhism in India was on the wane. This was in response to the Islamic expansion into South Asia

and the consequent rise of a militant Hinduism to repel the Moslems.

Buddhism had by then split into two schools — the Theravada and Mahayana. The Theravada was centred on Sri Lanka and followed the original Pali Buddhist literature; sparse in ritual and concentrated either on meditation or scriptural study the school bases its tradition on the original teachings and life of the Buddha. By contrast the Mahayana school evolved and considerably expanded the original literature and teachings of the Buddha. Unlike the Theravada which tended to ostrasise other beliefs the Mahayana absorbed them. The Hindu gods and goddesses, animist beliefs and magic and Tantra were all integrated. The Mahayana with its Sanskrit literature is thus highly ritualistic with an esoteric priesthood.

The Three Gems in Burma Today

Burmese Buddhists bow three times to images of the lord, pagodas or monks each of whom is refered to as phaya. Each bow is in honour of one of the the three gems: Buddha, the sangha (monks) and dhamma (teachings). The sangha or order of monks is evident throughout Burma and it is estimated that today it represents 10% of the male population. Many monks trace their lineage (teacher - disciple relationship) back to the time of the Buddha. The monks teach the dhamma and offer the people a means to earn merit. It is through the accumulation of merit that nebban or nirvana may ultimately be attained, perhaps over millenia of rebirths.

In the Burmese sangha there is no hierarchy as such and no distinction in dress between a venerable abott and a novice. Rather the authority is apparent from bearing, scholarliness or sanctity. In the scriptures there is an elaborate book of monastic discipline called the vinaya. The most fundamental rules for monks are complete celibacy, not being allowed to eat after mid-day and abstention from all intoxicating substances.

Monks can be highly individualistic as can be their monasteries. In one house the monks may be intellectuals, in another meditators. Some act as schools for lay children, others as colleges to further the education of young monks. Village monasteries act as community centres where the abbot will guide and counsel villagers in important matters, spiritually police the area to ensure high moral standards, and push the children through their three Rs. Monks can spend twenty hours a day in deep meditation or they can indulge in hobbies like gardening, literature or antiquarianism. They are free to live in the monastery of their own choosing and pursue their own path to enlightenment. A monastery like the Maha-gandayon with its 3,000 monks and novices at Amarapura is highly disciplined and organised — a sort of Jesuit university for Buddhist monks with an examination system and rigid daily regime. Country monasteries we may visit can be far more relaxed.

Even the smallest of villages will support a monastery with at least one monk. Prosperous villages like Sameikkon can have several monasteries. This is a convenient system for absorbing surplus males, reducing the birth rate and redistributing wealth. Each day the monks will go on an almsround and collect food from the villagers who by giving earn merit. Very few Burmese can go through a day without giving. Burmese culture is about giving not taking. Often the monks have more food than they can consume and support the homeless or aged.

The Supernatural

As mentioned, the Buddhism of Burma belongs to the Theravada sect. Unlike the colourful and ritualistic Mahayana school of the Himalayas this sect promotes an austere, at times severe faith with little allowance for the festive side of man's nature. But the Burmese are a colourful people who love song and dance, costume and magic. In the Theravada of the monks, with their emphasis on scholarship and meditation, there is little room for the theatre of ritual and ceremony. Yet man's instinct for such things goes back further than Buddhism itself and alongside Buddhism another worship has evolved, its roots deep in Burma's pre-Buddhist, animistic past. This is the world of the *nats.*

A nat can be anything from a spirit living in a particular locality, often the spirit of a Banyan tree, to a Hindu deity like Indra. On a national level there is an official pantheon of 37 nats comprised of past national heroes, like great kings, or more often than not antiheroes. Most of the nats have met their death in tragic circumstances - war, alcohol, drugs or murder.

We know from the chronicles that the Pagan king Kyanzittha, who reformed and purified Buddhism, was unable to eliminate such ancient beliefs and had the images of the nats confined in a special shrine at the Shwezigon. There is still a set there. Only one statue is original — an image of Indra or Thagyamin. The others date from more recent times for membership of the pantheon, though strictly limited to 37, changes from time to time over the centuries.

Many Burmese people place great hopes in the nats. The Buddha is long gone and no longer present on earth to help mankind. The monks are too detached to concern themselves with worldly affairs like passing an exam, getting a promotion or being successful in business. But the nats take an interest in such affairs. This interest can be

malevolent as well as benevolent. Thus it is important to keep the nats on your side. Many houses will have a nat shrine, identifiable by the coconuts offered to the 'lords', as well a Buddha shrine. Roadside nat shrines are visited by drivers setting out on long journeys.

The apogee of the nat cult is the *nat-pwe.* These are costly private ceremonies normally held in the donor's house. The *pwe* will continue round the clock, virtually non stop, for three days and nights. During this period the high priests or professional *nat-kadaws,* usually male transsexual dancers, will propitiate each of the 37 with ritual dances re-enacting the principal events from the god's life. They wear elaborate historical costumes and are accompanied by the wild, almost raucous, music of the traditional Burmese orchestra. The atmosphere is highly charged, and dancers may become possessed by a particular nat. One nat, U Min Kyaw, was an alcoholic and he tends, having taken possession, to demand drink and cigarettes in vast quantities. When the medium emerges from his or her trance there is no trace of intoxication.

Nat-pwe's are colourful and exotic, vibrant and ecstatic; nothing could be in starker contrast to the solemn recitals of the monks. Yet for a thousand years the monastic establishment have made no attempt to suppress what is so much part of the Burmese character. At the end of the pwe, when all the dances are done and the satisfied nats return to their heavenly abode and the people, feeling bettered, prepare to return to their human ones, it is to the Lord Buddha they finally bow.

Personal Names

These are connected to the astrological system. There are no family or surnames in Burma, though occasionally a famous parent's name might be incorporated into a name. A

name may consist of one or more syllables but there is no clear first or second name, formal or informal.
These days there is a fashion for Burmese personal names to become longer and longer, with three or more syllables. Then a long name may be shortened for the sake of brevity and out of affection, i.e. Ma Aye Aye Khine may be known as Ma Aye. When alphabeticised Burmese names are listed by the first character of the first syllable.

The giving of a name depends on the day of the week in which a child is born. The Burmese alpahbet, based on Pali, the ancient Indian religious language, is ordered into consonant groups. There is one group for each day of the week (which incidentally has 8 days - Wednesday being divided into two days for astrological purposes). The name must therefore include one or more of the birth day's consonants,

Day	Planet	Animal	Orientation	Consonants
Mon	Moon	Tiger	east	K,hK,G,nG
Tues	Mars	lion	SE	S,hS,Z,nY
Wed am	Mercury	tusker elephant	south	L,W
Wed pm	rahu (mythical)	non tusker	NW	R,Y
Thur	Jupiter	rat	west	P,hP,B,M
Fri	Venus	guinea-pig	north	T,hT,D,N
Sunday	Sun	galon (mythical bird)	NE	A or anything

i.e. Hpone Myint is Thursday-born, Tin Tun is Friday-born

Around a pagoda you will find shrines to each of the above days of the week and it is auspicious to worship at the shrine of your own particular day.

Honorifics are very important. Regardless of seniority or status it is incredibly rude not to use one. It is often polite uprank your subject.

Ko	brother
Ma	sister

U	uncle
Daw	auntie
Saya	teacher — often used for a professional or expert

These days a lot of people use the English words unke for uncle and *antee* for aunty.

Calender and Festivals

The Burmese have a lunar calender and each month is exactly 28 days. The Burmese era starts 638 years after the Christian Era. Thus AD1997 is BE1359. The Burmese era dates from the mythical foundation of Pagan by the Pyu king, Duttabaung, as described in the court chronicles of the 18th and 19th centuries. The days of each month of the calender are counted in sequences of waning and waxing according to the state of the moon. Thus the 17th day of a month might be the 3rd day of waxing or waning of that month according to the lunar position. Though international businesses use the Christian calender, most Burmese people still use the traditional calender with its many festivals. In addition to state festivals or *nei* (days) there are the Buddhist *pwe* (pronounced 'pway'). Many of the state 'days' date from the Socialist Period and these have been embellished and added to by Slorc with their love of military ceremonial. The exact dates of the Buddhist pwe vary from year to year according to the position of the moon. As a rough guide the festival will take place on the full moon day. In addition to national pwe commemorating the main events from the life of the Buddha there are annual pagoda pwes in all towns and villages. Akin to the Spanish fiesta, these carnivals can last for several days and villagers from miles around will come to worship, market and be entertained in the bamboo fairground that springs up around the pagoda. Frequently on our river journey we encounter such events and if lucky may see a *zat-pwe* or 'opera' in action.

January	Pyatho	4th	Independence Day
		12th	Karen New Year
February		Tabo-dweh	*Htamane* — the rice harvest festival
March	Tabaung	2nd	Peasants' Day
			Armed Forces Day

April	Thingyan	New Year — Water Festival
May	Kason	Buddha's Enlightenment
June	Nayon	ceremonial examinations of the *Tipitika* (scriptures) for monks
July	Wa-zo	offering of robes to monks at *Kathein* marks the start of Lent
	19th	*Arzani* or Martyr's Day — remembering the assasination of Aung San and his cabinet
August	Wa-gaung	Taungbyon nat pwe (20m north of Mandalay)
		Yadanagu nat pwe (Amarapura)
September	Tawthalin	
October	Thadin-gyut	end of Lent — Festival of Lights
		the Inle Phaung-daw-oo Pagoda pwe and water processions
November	Tazaung-mon	further light festivals and weaving (of monks robes) festivals;
		at the Shwedagon there are all night weaving races
		Shan New Year
December	Nadaw	various nat festivals

Architecture: Pagodas and Stupas

"Someone with a greater regard for alliteration than for truth once said that the principle productions of Burma were pagodas, pongyis and pariah dogs."

SIR JG SCOTT, *The Burman*. 1882.

The Buddhist conception of architecture is quite different from the western one. Traditionally domestic or residential architecture, including royal palaces, were made of perishable materials whether bamboo and palm fronds or solid teak. Masonry, stone or brick, was reserved for sacred constructions. These, whether a pagoda (stupa) or temple, were conceived as visual monuments to the teachings and life of the Lord Buddha. Unlike a Western cathedral they rarely have an interior and when they do it is merely a shrine or prayer hall projecting from a solid central structure. A newcomer to Burma when first approaching the Shwedagon might ask "where is the entrance? how do I get in". The answer is that there is no way in as it is a solid monument, adored and worshiped from afar or in the many shrines about its foot. Within the mass of masonry is the relic chamber sealed and buried by tons of brick at the time of dedication. Otherwise there is no inside.

This form, the stupa, originated in ancient India and the earliest in Burma date from the 5th — 8th centuries at Thare-ya-kittiya (Prome). They are cosmic symbols; their presence benefits mankind; their construction will smooth the donor's rebirth into a new life conducive to eventual enlightenment. There is no higher position of respect for a layman in Burma than to be the builder of pagoda. That is why the Burmese landscape is littered with many millions of them. No hill, village glade or promontory goes unembellished. There is little merit to be had in renovation so pagodas have a limited life span crumbling to join the dust of Burma a century or so behind its donor. Kings built vast edifices that both edified the state and ensured its future stability. A village headman, his life's work done, has but one task remaining before passing on. In both cases the construction of a pagoda is not a selfish act for it is done for family and friends, the village and country at large;

above all the merit earned is shared with all mankind in its quest for salvation.

Evolved from the stupa form, a solid mass of brick that enshrines sacred relics, is the temple. These were known to the Pyu and were later developed at Pagan between the 11th and 13th centuries. Called gu or cave on account of their original dark mystical interiors that emulated the early holy places of early Buddhist India. As Pagan grew from city-state to empire, these changed from being closed single story buildings to become multi-storied with light airy shrines open to the great views. Architecture at Pagan over a short period had assumed a terrific confidence. Breakthroughs in structural engineering, like the flying buttress, relieving arch and diaphragm vaults, enabled the Pagan builder to build bigger and bigger and up and up. The temple can be a Greek cross plan like the Ananda or Dhamma-yan-gyi, or on a longitudinal axis like the Sulamani or Hti-lo-min-lo. There are pentagonal ones — the fifth side honouring Mettreya the future buddha, the most dazzling example of which is the Dhamm-yazika stupa a Pwasaw. Many of these temples were filled with paintings and sculpture, decorative or didactic, telling the story of the Buddha's life or past lives (Jataka) or portraying excerpts from the scriptures (Tipitika).

There is little good stone in Burma so temples and pagodas tend to be made from brick. The brick is then covered with a stucco finish which would be decorated with rich and lively carving. This would have been whitewashed, coloured and gilded in parts. The finial consists of a hti or royal umbrella — a gilded tiara-like object from which dozens of little bells hang that tinkle in the wind.

There are other brick structures — monastic libraries and occasionally a monastery itself. Most other monasteries were made from teak. The columns are individual trunks selected from the royal forests on account of their height and straightness. These are piled into the ground and a couple of meters above a platform is made with

elaborate pavilions with tiered roofs housing the various apartments for the images, prayer, accommodation and study. These apartments could be gilded, lacquered and were elaborately carved with decorative motifs and scenes from the scriptures.

Images: Buddha and Divine Beasts

Temples and pagodas may enshrine long hidden relics and serve as cosmic reminders of the efficacy of the Buddha's teachings but they also serve a practical function as acting as giant galleries for images of the lord, his life and mission. They are also filled with heavenly creatures, adorning vaults and arches, decorative yet divine. Whether painted, carved in plaster or wood, cast in bronze or more rarely chiselled from stone or marble images abound throughout Burma. No home, no matter how humble, is complete without the family shrines to the Lord Buddha and household nats. In popular art the nats are gilded and costumed like divine dolls.

Icons can be imported, like the Hindu gods like Ganesha (Mahapenni) or Saravasti, or invented as part of new born cults — in the Shan States one colonial District Commissioner has been enshrined as a nat. Burmese iconography can be strictly classical following ancient Indian traditions regulating posture or mudra or it can be highly eclectic borrowing and disregarding according to mode.

The main styles of Buddha image follow the principal dynasties and periods of Burmese art: Mon, Pyu,Pagan (early and late), Ava and Konbaung. There are regional variations in the Arakan and Shan States. These styles are quite distinctive.

In each of these styles or periods there are distinctive mudra or gestures. The image may be standing, seated, or

reclining and portray events from the *bodawin* or life of the Buddha:

dhyana	meditating with hands clasped in lap
bhumisparsa	one hand touching the earth calling it to witness at the moment of enlightenment
dharmacakra	one hand turned in against the chest the other outwards symbolising the turning of the wheel of the law; the moment when the Buddha explains the workings of the *dhamma* or cosmic law
abhaya	or 'fearless' the Buddha stands with arm outstretched holding off evil

Likewise the schools of mural painting follow the dynastic periods and can wither illustrate scenes from the life of the Buddha or be highly decorative.

A journey on the Irrawaddy from Prome to Mandalay is a chronological passage through the history of Burma's art. We start with the slightly crude Indianised works of the early Pyu,travel to the flowering of Burmese sculpture and painting at Pagan and on to witness its renaissance at Ava, Amarapura and Mandalay five centuries later. We pass from the classical of Pagan to rococo of Mandalay. From the spiritually empowered to the vacuously happy. We will see nats, sometimes sinister, more often quaint. *Chinthe* leogryphs guard temple approaches; ogres and assorted divine beasts protect shrines, monasteries and the Buddha himself.

Summary of Milages

From Rangoon and Prome to Mandalay:

RANGOON	0	
PROME	280	(0)
THAYET-MYO	320	(40)
ZAUNG CHAN TAUNG	351	(71)
MI CHAUNG YE	367	(88)
MINGALAY (Gwe-chaung)		376
(97)		
MINBU	392	(113)
YEN NAN CHAUNG	417	(138)
SALE	455	(176)
PAGAN	484	(205)
PAKOKKU	510	(231)
MYIN MU	573	(294)
SAGAING	604	(325)
MANDALAY	613	(334)

From Mandalay to Bhamo

MANDALAY	0	
MINGUN	6	
KYAUKMYOUNG		52
THABEITKYIN	77	
MALE	87	
KHHNYAT	107	
TAGAUNG	127	
TIGYAING	151	
INYWA	173	
KATHA	193	
SHWEGU	237	
BHAMO		277

Part Three — A River Guide

Introduction

The Irrawaddy gives Burma its life. Named after the Hindu *eravati* or 'elephant river' the river in Burmese consciousness, like the Ganges to the Indian, is a spiritual entity; provider of the wherewithal for life and happiness; material and spiritual well being. Rising in the southern Himalayas, it dissects the land from north to south for 1,350 miles, emptying through a nine armed delta into the Indian Ocean. In colonial times, before railways and car roads the river was known as the 'Road to Mandalay'.

To follow the Irrawaddy's entire course, from its undiscovered source lost in the Himalayas to the Delta, would be to run the gamut of Burma's varied climatic zones. North of Myitkyina in the Kachin Hills, where the M'la hka and N'mai kha rivers rise and join forces at Myit-hson to form the Irrawaddy, is an area of rain forest with high rainfall. At Bhamo, the furthest point to which the Irrawaddy is navigable by large vessels (about 930 miles, from the Delta), the river skirts across the edge of the Shan Plateau cutting through a series of gorges or defiles, the upper two of which are staggeringly impressive. Just above Mandalay the river emerges from the forested hill country to enter the enormous Upper Burma plain known as the Dry Zone account of the low rainfall. This was and is the home of classical Burmese Buddhist civilisation — the ancient Pyu cities, the first empire of Pagan and later empire of Ava.

Below Mandalay, just above the confluence with the Chindwin the Irrawaddy seems to break up into a myriad channels and streams separated by sandbars and gleaming white islands. Here the river is several miles wide and just to cross from one bank to another can be a day's sail, zig

zagging through the maze of dune covered humps. Yet here, when it rains, the water level will rise a hundred feet drowning this archipelago of silt and sand, washing it away in a brown torrent at speeds of up to 8 miles an hour. Desert becomes ocean and the fishermen and cultivators who have camped on these fertile islands are up and gone for the duration of the monsoon.

The Chindwin is another story. A river as beautiful and romantic as the Irrawaddy, it is navigable for 380 miles on the shallowest draft steamers man has ever made. The Chindwin is even shallower than the Irrawaddy yet in the monsoon flowing faster to form whirlpools and uncontrollable eddies. Following the Indian border the river cuts down through Nagaland from its origin in Tibet.

South of Pagan the river narrows again and travels through a desert of scrub and cacti, the hottest part of Burma, with a rainfall of 25 inches a year. By Prome, still narrow but good and deep for navigators the river cuts through wooded hills to break out in to the flat plain of lower Burma. Here the rainfall jumps from 25 inches to 200 the weather is very humid rather than very hot. The cultivation of cotton, ground nuts, beans and pulses give way to paddy. In colonial times this was the 'rice basket of Asia' and by the 1850s had been reclaimed from swamp and jungle to feed the hungry millions of the Indian Empire. (Burma's population has quadrupled since the 1930s and the country is no longer the rice exporter she was.) This thousand square mile Delta reaches from the Gulf of Martaban, south-west of Rangoon to the Upper Andaman Sea with its great rice port at Bassein on the edge of the Bay of Bengal.

Mileage along the riverways are measured from Rangoon, as far as Mandalay, and from Mandalay, when navigating the northern stretch. Our journey Prome to Mandalay / Mandalay to Prome is a total of 340 land miles.

We here list a number of regular stops where we have discovered river stations with sites of historical or archaeological importance, centres of traditional manufacture and industry, or places of charm and beauty. There may be other places we choose to stop at and it may be necessary to omit one or more of these halts perhaps because at certain times of the year a particular channel may be blocked and we can not gain access.

Rangoon **0 miles**

"Rangoon owes its history to two factors, the Shwe Dagon Pagoda and the River. The former made it a place of note in earlier ages; the latter has made it the chief port of Burma today."

BR PEARN, *History of Rangoon*. 1939

Rangoon is a recent capital. In 1854, following the 2nd Anglo Burmese War the British made the small port with its important national pilgrimage shrine the administrative capital of their recent acquisition — Lower Burma. Up till then, despite its excellent location on the Rangoon River, Rangoon had been of limited economic and political significance .The city stands on the Eastern edge of the Delta and is on the Rangoon River, not the Irrawaddy. It was not connected by water to the Irrawaddy proper till the construction of the Twante Canal in the early part of this century.

Originally known as Okkala and later Dagon (as in the Shwedagon Pagoda), Rangoon was renamed Yangon or 'The End of Strife' after the conquest of Lower Burma by King Alaunghpaya in 1755. The city later became anglicised as 'Rangoon'. The name has now officially reverted to Yangon. The downstream port of Syriam had up till then been the entreport for Upper Burma.

The British laid out the city with its grid plan — the cross-streets being numbered in the American way. The

city soon prospered as a glance at the magnificent colonial architecture will tell. Rangoon was a cosmopolitan capital with large Indian and Chinese communities.

As you walk along the street
Many curious folk you will meet,
Nearly every sort of man
From the Shores of Hindustan;
Persians, Turks, and bland Parsis
Moguls, Gurkhas, Siamese,
Placid folk from far Cathay -
Where's the Burman stowed away?

RODWAY SWINHOE. *The Incomplete Guide to Burma*. 1923

Though the non-Burman population decimated in number and wealth by the 1962 Revolution the cosmopolitan nature of the city can be seen in the many temples and mosques, churches and cathedrals, commercial buildings and palatial residences.

Rangoon has always been one of the loveliest cities in Asia and until recently caught in an enchanted time warp. As the country opens and money floods in from other Asian countries the first casualty is the magnificent architectural heritage.

Rangoon Division now has a population of over three million and covers an area of over 200 square miles.

Shwedagon Pagoda

According to Burmese accounts the pagoda was constructed in 585BC. It has since been, and is still being, much embellished. Successive Mon and Burman kings and queens added their weights in gold to the spire as it rose higher and higher through the centuries. The finial or *hti* is encrusted with enormous rubies and diamonds. The Shwedagon finally reached its present height of 326ft in the 15th century under the patronage of the Pegu queen Shin Sawbu. Tradition ascribes that the Lord Buddha gave

eight of his hairs to two Mon merchants who returned to their land and dedicated the pagoda. It is now the most famous shrine in Burma and truly a wonder of the world. Best visited at night, one enters another world of gilded spires and tinkling *hti* bells, flickering candles and reverberating gongs. The Shwedagon is a social sort of place: people from all over Rangoon, or visiting from up-country, meet friends and family here; they picnic in the pavilions built for pilgrims; it is a place for lovers to meet; the elderly come to fill their day and prepare for the days of the next life.

The pagoda rises from the 190 ft high Dagon Hill and has four main entrances — one to each cardinal point — with long covered stairs, commanded at their feet by giant chinthé lions, and lined with pagoda shops selling flowers and religious paraphernalia. The S and E stairs have been remodelled recently. The main terrace was levelled flat by the Pegu kings in the 15th century; it is 14 acres and paved with marble slabs. The main stupa has a circumference of 1,421 feet; the base is octagonal; each side lined with 8 subsidiary stupas: total 64. At each corner is a *manothiha* or sphinx. Octagonal terraces rise for 80 feet; there is only one terrrace above the main platform that is accessible and only to monks and male Buddhists. Above these are the circular bands that rise to the hti finial.

Opposite the covered *zaung-dan* (stair halls) are the four principal shrines dedicated to each of the four buddhas who have manifested themselves during the present Buddhist era. Filling the platform are several hundred shrines and temples, mostly dating from the colonial period and Rangoon's development as a mercantile capital. There are shrines erected by various merchant guilds including the Chinese Buddhist Community. A fire in 1931 destroyed many of these pavilions and they were subsequently rebuilt. There are many fine examples of traditional wood carving. About the main stupa are the planetary shrines for the days of the week with their animals.

There are countless other shrines, statues and symbolic objects. The divine beasts are everywhere as are the nats. Note the great Maha Ganda bell cast by King Singu in 1779. It is 23 tons in weight and has a diameter of over six feet and stands seven feet high. In 1825 the British attempted to send it back to London as booty but whilst loading it fell into the Rangoon River and was abandoned there. Later an association of pious Burmese salvaged it from the river bed and were allowed to replace in the Shwedagon. There is another larger bell, the Mahatisadda Ghanda that is 40 tons in weight; donated by King Tharawaddy in 1848 and the second largest bell in Burma.

Sule Pagoda
At the heart of 'Downtown' the Sule stands 157' high and is said to be 2,200 years old enshrining sacred relics sent by the King of Sri Lanka at the time of Burma's conversion. A haven of peace in the bustling commercial centre of Rangoon, the pagoda is fast becoming dwarfed by high rise buildings.

Scott Market
This extensive market is on Aung San Road, and close to the Trader's Hotel. There is a classical front with shopping arcades on two levels. Behind extensive halls project back as far as the railway lines. The Scott Maket is not just a tourist market as most Rangoonese use it for their shopping needs. However, there is an excellent selection of handicrafts, antiques (new and old!) gems and jewellry here. Note that up-country such items are often far cheaper. US$ or FECs are accepted by most of the stand holders. The market has since been renamed Bo-Gyoke Aung San Market in honour of Burma's independence hero *Bo-Gyoke* (General) Aung San.

Htauk-kyan War Cemetery is situated about 21 miles (or 45 minutes) northeast of Rangoon. Meticulously main-

tained by the War Graves Commission it is the resting place of 33,421 allied soldiers who offered their lives in the Second World War .

Prome **East Bank, 280 Miles**

"Prome in the language of the official books is a town of 30,000 inhabitants, the headquarters of a district, the terminus of the Rangoon-Prome Railway. It is equipped with a Municipality , a Jail, a Court House, Waterworks, and various other blessings commonly provided by a conscientious, hard working, tax collecting Government. Blue - books describe annually the progress it has made along the path of civic virtue, and long pages describes its statistics to some unknown end. If there are any for whom the assimilation of such knowledge is of profit, he is respectfully referred to these sources. The purpose of this chapter is but to glance briefly at the past of one of the oldest cities in Burma".

J Scott O'Connor
Mandalay and other Cities of the Past in Burma. 1907

Located 161 miles (258 km) by road northwest of Rangoon, lies the city of Prome or Pyay. This is an important river port and our southernmost base. It is here the Irrawaddy starts for us. Below the Delta fans out to cover an area of nearly 1,000 square miles of creeks and islands. By Prome the river has narrowed to a width of less than a mile and deepens too. The Arakan Yoma begin their ascent forming a ribbon of hills that follow the river's west bank all the way to Pakokku. Prome is a pleasant town, as yet unravaged by developers lusty for land. It is set in the rolling hills of middle Burma amidst wild jungle and teak plantations. There are pockets of rice cultivation in the surrounding valleys. The countryside is more interesting than the

flat rice plains of the Delta which we cross by car, coach or railway to reach here. With its many old colonial houses and public buildings and wide streets modern day Prome is very much a British creation. However 5 miles east the ruins of Old Prome or Thare-ya-kittiya may be found in and around the village of Hmawza. These ruins date from the 5th century AD and are amongst the earliest Buddhist vestiges in Burma belonging to the Pyu people who have been described as proto-Burmese. Pyu civilisation is the forerunner of Pagan and there are clear linguistic, artistic and architectural links. Pyu life and culture was described with great fascination by the Imperial Chinese chronicles and various embassies had been exchanged between the two states. The Pyu were displaced by a Nanchao Chinese raid in 732 AD. From 732 till the 16th century there is little news of Prome in contemporary histories. Then in 1541 the Portuguese Ferdinand Mendez Pinto recorded King Bayinnaung's siege and capture of the town: "The gate was opened, the city delivered up, the inhabitants all cut to pieces, without so much sparing one; the King and Queen made prisoners, their treasure taken, the buildings and temples demolished and many other inhumanities exercised with such outrageousness, the belief whereof is beyond imagination and thought of men..."

Following the annexation of Lower Burma in 1852. Prome became an important adminstrative and trading centre not far south of the Burmese border and an important stop for IFC steamers on the Mandalay express run. But with the construction of the Rangoon Prome railway in the 1860s the town increased in importance and travellers to Mandalay would cut 2 days of a journey to Mandalay by taking the train to Prome and then an express steamer up the 'Road to Mandalay'.

Nowadays, an arrival by road is confronted by a fine equestrian statue of General Aung San set on an island in the midst of a roundabout. Roads lead off to the Strand and port, the Shwe-hsan-daw Pagoda and Lanmadaw (or

main road) with its shops, cinemas and markets. Lanmadaw runs parallel to the Strand and in between still stands the original colonial cantonment with its court houses, administrative buildings and splendid residences. Most of these are in tact, albeit decrepit, and are splendid examples of the dak bungalow type with brick base and teak upper level, with deep verandah running around all four sides on both levels.

The river at Prome is the narrowest point south of the Ava Bridge and for this reason the government has decided to build a bridge here. The bridge will connect Middle Burma to the western highway that runs from Bassein to Pakokku which was constructed with great intention during the Socialist era. It will also connect Middle Burma to the Taungup Pass road that crosses the Arakan Yoma to reach Burma's western seaboard.

In the 18th century an early British ambassador called here on his way to pay his respects to the Golden Feet of the King of Ava: "I found that I was myself an object of universal wonder. ...the dogs set up universal barking: the men gaped, the children followed me, and the women as usual expressed their astonishment by loud laughter, and clapping their hands; yet not the least indication of contempt was manifested nor anything construed into an intention to offed".

The Shwe-hsan-daw Pagoda

Is the third most revered shrine in Lower Burma, after the Shwedagon in Rangoon and Shwe-ma-daw in Pegu. In fact it is slightly taller than the Shwedagon. The pagoda is believed to have been erected in the 6th century BC by two brothers, Ajjika and Bhallika, and contains four hairs of the Buddha, one tooth, a vest, a shawl and belt. It rises high above the town on a steep hill. There is a modern lift to help the infirm or unfit to ascend. Just east is the colossal seated **Hse-tat-gyi Buddha**, 219ft high; rebuilt 1919. The annual festival, when the pagoda is visited by thou-

sands of pious Buddhists, is held in November. Note the splendid *chinthe* that guard the northern stair hall.

Lanmadaw Museum

This is opposite the **Shwe-hpone-Myint pagoda** and looked after by a local association of trustees. There is a curious, if at moments eccentric collection of Buddha images. Well worth popping in for and remember to make a donation.

Thare-ya-kittiya

The pleasant rural village of Hmawza, five miles east of the modern town, is spread over Burma's earliest and most important archaeological site, dating from before the rise of Pagan. One can not overestimate the importance of this site. The Archaeology Department Museum houses the best collection of early Buddhist sculpture in Burma. Dating from circa 5th — 8th centuries AD, Thare-ya-kittiya was the capital of the Pyu of whom, as mentioned, we know quite a lot from contemporary Chinese sources. They were devout Buddhists, excellent craftsmen and exquisite musicians. Indeed dancers had been sent to the Tang court where they had caused a stir with their exotic movements. The iconography of the images found indicates a mixed religious life, incorporating elements from the main Indian cults: Brahmanism, Mahayana Buddhism and Theravada Buddhism. Though over a hundred miles up river the Pyu had wide trading and religious contacts with the pan-Indian world. The city-state was walled and covered a large area of approx. 30 square miles. The populace raised crops and farmed within this area. Beyond the walls were wild forests and savage beasts. Within were art and culture, merchants and princes. At the cardinal points jut outside the gates stood three colossal stupas not dissimilar to the giant bulbous types found in Ceylon. Three of these survive: **Hpaya-gyi**, **Hpaya-ma** and **Baw-baw-gyi**. It is interesting to note that Pagan's first great king, Anawratha, on his victorious return from conquering the

Mon kingdom of lower Burma stopped here and removed the sacred relics of the Baw-baw-gyi for re-enshrinement in the Shwe-san-daw Pagoda at Pagan. In their place he enshrined his own votive tablets indicating the absorbtion of this powerless but symbolically important state into the first unified empire of Burma. In 1113 AD Pyu was still being used as a literary language and appears on one face of Rajakumar's quadralingular Myazedi inscription at Pagan. Also of importance are the brick temples, like the **Be-be-gyi** or **Lei-myet-hna** that are the clear precursors to the Early Pagan type with their lean-too vaults, voussoired brick patterns and 'gothic' arches.

Min-gyi-taung Hill
The hill rises just above the start of the new bridge and offers a splendid view of the town and river. It is well worth a visit at sunset. There are some hermit's caves here too.

Thayet-myo **West Bank, 320 Miles**

A delightful river halt half a day's sail north of Prome. Between 1824 and 1855 Thayet was the border town between Royal and British Burma. The town retains its colonial character; its civil lines of dak bungalows draped in bourgainvillea, court houses, jail, post office and markets all built in a rusticated Anglo-Indian manner. The oldest golf course in Burma can be reached by a short horse cart ride. Established in 1876 it was rumoured to be twinned with St Andrews. However when we put this tit bit in an IFC brochure we received an angry note from the secretary of the Royal and Ancient. There are botanical gardens on the edge of the town and a bustling strand along the steep riverbank where stevedores puff an chant as they load and off load cargo.

Minhla and Gwe-chaung **West Bank, 376 Miles**

The river is the key to Burma. Knowing this, in 1860 King Mindon built forts to keep the British out of Upper or Royal Burma. Italian and French military engineers, sympathetic to royal aims, designed them according to the latest technology. Gwe-chaung is the larger of the two, standing high on a hill on the east bank with elaborate fortifications and gun emplacements commanding a narrow stretch of the river. Minhla, on the riverside of the town, is smaller and less imposing but equally strategic, commanding the immediate channel between the forts. In the 3rd War of 1885 King Thibaw sought to block the advance of the Irrawaddy Flotilla using a combination of firepower and scuttling a vessel mid channel. The plans failed for two reasons. Firstly because the vessel carrying Captains Molinari and Comotto, the Italian military advisers, was captured with their secret plans for the the defence of Mandalay. Secondly, because the British adopted a tactic that they might well have advised the French in the case of the Maginot Line or indeed might have been remembered by their successors at Singapore in 1942: Gwe-chaung was captured by the Royal Marines from the rear before the defenders could bring their guns round. The battle for the Minhla redoubt was the only real action of an otherwise bloodless war. It was here that Rudjard Kipling lost his best friend and eternal poem *On the Road to Mandalay* voices the sorrow of his loss. The forts toppled, the Irrawaddy Flotilla sped upstream at full steam; Mandalay fell without a fight and King Thibaw and Queen Supayarlat were carried off in the *PS Thorea* to ignominious exile. Some years later the *Thorea* sank after catching fire.

Minbu **West Bank, 376 Miles**

We moor at Htauk-sha-pin the port for the modern town of Minbu. We are now into Burma's Dry Zone — an area that start here and extends to just south of Mandalay and west up the Lower Chindwin valley. Outside the monsoon the Dry Zone resembles a desert: it could be in Mexico or Texas, the only vegetation in the being cacti and thorny scrub. To carry the comparison with Texas further this is oil country as we will find upstream at Chauk, the 'black gold' city of Burma. Minbu is a centre of natural gas production. Indeed gas is evident from a visit to the **Mud Geysers**. These mini volcanoes hiss, slurp and belch great bubbles of methane from their simmering craters. Apparantly this mud is of a very high quality and travellers are welcome to apply it to their complexions. Other than the mud geysers the town has few attractions.

Across the river, **Magwe** is a more interesting place with its celebrated **Myat-thalon Pagoda.** Due to shallow waters, we can not moor at Magwe, but, when the Shwe-set-daw road is closed on account of the rains, as an alternative we cross by sanpan to visit the pagoda instead. The sanctuary is perched on the buff overlooking the river and commands spectacular views of the Irrawaddy. Attractive are the winding covered stairways that ascend the steep wooded bank from the river — erected by the pious to shade the pious on the final stage of their water bourn pilgrimages.

Shwe-set-daw

This pagoda which is located 30 miles inland from Minbu and difficult to reach at the best of times. As one traveller wrote to us: "in fact to find a bus to charter in the remote provincial town of Minbu was a fascinating activity its own right." We can only make the pilgrimage until well after the rains (late November) as the road is a very rough

and fords a number of rivers. It is though a beautiful drive through a national park that has been replanted by the Forestry Department whose policy of turning the barren wastes of the Dry Zone into plantations is laudable.

The religious complex lies deep in the hills and there are two principal shrines, each on a separate hill and each bearing a foot print of the Buddha. This is the point where manifest as a giant he touched down whilst flying over Burma — one foot to each side of the valley. The higher hill provides splendid views of the surrounding hills and is a pleasant walk from shrine to shrine interconnected by extensive covered *zaung-dan* or stair halls sometimes running parallel in a threesome up the steep hillside. There are 698 steps to the summit. Along the way are various nat figures. A national pagoda festival takes place from late January to mid April or Thingyan (New Year). Then the valley becomes a giant camp and pilgrims from all over the country visit and stay.

Salé **East Bank, 455 Miles**

Salé has a population of about 25,000 and boasts a modern fertiliser factory financed with aid during the Socialist era. However its fame dates to at least a hundred years before for Salé was the home town of U Ponna the most celebrated poet and playwright of King Mindon's court. He is known as the 'Shakespeare of Burma'. His monastery, the Yout Soun Kyaung was donated in his honour by Mindon in 1879 and houses many of his original writings. Now restored the joy for us are the splendid wood carvings that decorate the exterior walls. Carved from teak, these reliefs are virtually three dimensional so vigorous and vital is the carving. There are 45 scenes portraying events from the Buddha's former lives. The monastery is now a museum and there is a good collection of images and monastic receptacles within. The *kyaung* is carried on 154 teak piers.

Mount Popa **Inland from Sale**

Mount Popa (*popa* is Sanskrit for flower) is 4,981 feet high and located 50 miles Southeast of Pagan. We will see from afar its bulk loom out of the Dry Zone desert as we steam up or down the river. Travellers may make their own arrangements to visit it, best by private taxi from Pagan. The mount is the spiritual Mount Olympus of Burma for this is the 'abode of the nats'. Such a description is perhaps more literary or mythological than actual and a visit in architectural terms is something of an anti-climax. The drive though is picturesque. The present day sanctuary consists of a motley collection of houses set in a valley between the main mountain and a lesser but dramatic volcanic plug. The shrines contain nat images which at various times of the year are propitiated in elaborate n*at-pwe*. The

principal nats honoured here are the Maha-giri or Lord of the Great mountain who was formerly a blacksmith Nga Tin De and his sister Shwe Myet-hna or Golden Face. They were martyred by a cruel Pagan king in the 4th century AD who later out of remorse dedicated a shrine to them here. However the other 37 nats are honoured here and there is now a considerable cult to Popa Medaw the mother of Mahagiri and and Shwe Myet-hna. Nat-pwes here can be a great spectacle if one is lucky enough to encounter such an event. The lesser mount may be climbed for merit or exercise rather than aesthetic appreciation of the rather recent artistic additions. The annual festival is in May/June. Victorian literature describes a cult of snake worshippers living on the summit of the main mount. Deep in the dark crater they would writhe to chants and drum beats wrapped in hissing pythons. Nowadays the python ravers have been replaced by green keepers for a golf course adorns the volcano's lower slopes.

Pagan **East Bank, 484 Miles**

The World Heritage Site of Pagan is the wonder of wonders in this 'Golden Land' of wonders. Scattered across this vast arid plain stand over 3,000 surviving monuments that proclaim the piety and power of Burma's first empire. As a former centre of the Buddhist spirituality and learning, Pagan ranks amongst the great sites of India and Tibet. As a manifestation of a dynamic and original form of architecture, Pagan stands alongside the other great Buddhist centres of South-East Asia such as Angkor in Cambodia or Borobadur in Java.

Some of these monuments such as the Dhamma-yan-gyi are colossal brick pyramids, others like the That-byin-nyu or Gadaw-palin soar up over 50m high with resplendent

spires. There are small temples with rich schemes of wall painting and others with outstanding cycles of sculpture.

There were originally 10,000 temples at Pagan mainly constructed of brick between the 11th and 13th centuries. In these three centuries Burma was first unified as single political entity under the kings of Pagan. The Theravada Buddhist way, sponsored by her kings, remains the religion of Burma today. Little remains of the original palace and domestic architecture, for the people of Pagan glorified their faith not themselves. These many monuments are to the Buddha alone. In his dedicatory inscriptions King Alaungsithu, perhaps the greatest of Pagan builders, tells us nothing about himself but a lot about contemporary religious beliefs.

Framed on two sides by the great Irrawaddy, the site covers an area of approximately 25 miles. The main concentration of monuments is around the old city site situated on the bend of the river. Yet in the outer areas of Minnanthu and Thiri-ya-pyit-saya are rich concentrations of lesser known but superbly crafted works. At Pagan no two monuments are the same. All are highly original in design and conception. The structural techniques, similar to the gothic forms of Western cathedral architecture, were in advance of contemporary engineering in Europe. Technologically daring in concept, and exquisite in execution, the temples of Pagan are of overpowering beauty.

To gain a true impression of the site some form of transportation is essential. Traditionally travellers have used the local horse carts and many of their drivers have an excellent knowledge of the monuments and their history. Bicycles are an excellent choice and metalled roads have now been constructed connecting the main centres of population. The villages of New Pagan and Myinkaba are centres of traditional lacquer manufacture, that is both robust and attractive and makes the best possible souvenir of Burma. In the local town of Nyaung-oo, to the west of the site, there is a large local market where locally made

handicrafts may be purchased. The Nyaung-oo market is a lively and colourful place to study local life and customs.

Pagan has an airport with several flights a day to both Yangon and Mandalay. There are road and rail connections to the rest of Burma. The most scenic and comfortable way of getting there is by river and there are now daily public services to and from Mandalay in addition to the IFC. Burma is a land of great rivers and Pagan was a river empire. To follow her kings and reach the temple studded banks across azure shimmering waters is a moment laden with the power of history.

Pagan can not fail to move. Ask any visitor who has watched the sun rise or set across these fields of glowing terracotta brick temples. This is the spiritual heart of Burma, Where the young Burmese nation, first unified under one king and one faith, came to express its creative genius. The temples now are empty. The great communities of chanting monks and learned scholars disbanded with the anarchy that followed the Mongol invasion of 1278. Gone are the reverberating gongs and tingling temple bells, alms processions and sumptuous ceremonies. In place is a calmness and peace. And a vision of what man when moved by philosophy is capable of.

Periods at Pagan 1000 — 1300

There are three main periods into which the architecture, painting and sculpture fall:

The Early Period — (c.850-1120) flowered during the reigns of Anawratha, Saw Lu and Kyanzittha which was a period of territorial expansion and consolidation. it was also a period of religious purification in which the Theravada sect achieved dominance. Temple and stupa construction follow the Pyu prototypes. Temples were called *gu* or caves and like caves had dark mystical interiors. They are single story and have lean-too vaults running round the central shrine block. Early temples were

filled with mural paintings portraying stories from the life of the Buddha and other Theravada subjects. The old Mahayana and Hindu gods are relegated to protective and decorative duties rather than objects of worship. Mon was the literature favoured in inscriptions. Stupas, like the Shwe-zigon or Shwe-hsan-daw were colossal with seven terraces that acted as gallery's for 550 glazed plaques, each containing a scene from one of the Buddha's former lives or *zat* (Jatakas). The early style reached its peak of brilliance in the Ananda temple built by Kyanzittha (below). Early period sculpture betrays a strong Indian influence; the physiognomy has a more pronounced nose and chin than in later images which have more mongoloid features. This may indicate that Pagan patronage attracted monks and scholars, artists and artisans from Indian where Buddhism was in decline.

The **Middle Period** (1170-1300) was a short transitional period when Pagan art and architecture threw off its influences, whether Mon, Pyu or Indian, and began to establish a clear idiom of its own. Two great temples date from the reign of Sithu I, the Shwe-gu-gyi and That-byin-nyu. In these, the Burmese architect explored the possibilities of a heightened elevation with upper levels and shrines. Interiors become lighter and loftier. Structural techniques, using load relieving architectural devices, enable more daring expressions of this craving for height and majesty that has been described as 'aspiration'. During this period Burmese became a literature in its own right and displaced Mon in epigraphy.

In the **Late Period** (1170-1300) a balanced and harmonious formula is arrived at that seems to have satisfied the Pagan patron's aesthetic needs. The emphasis on a soaring elevation of the That-byin-nyu, or colossal pyramid form of the Dhamma-yan-gyi are merged in the Sulamani type — a compromise between the vertical and horizontal: a majestic, resplendent solution. The main shrine is on the upper level and the dark caves of the early temples have

been opened to light up the radiant Buddha and let one enjoy the view. In the Late Period wall painting abounds; it is finer and more delicate than the spiritually charged early work; more decorative than didactic. Sculpture has lost the Indianised features — the Buddha is very much a Burman: round faced and good humoured.

Kiscadale Publications in conjunction with Unesco are at present publishing a nine volume inventory of all monuments at Pagan with a total of over 3,000 pages! We here list a selection that you will be most likely to visit during your days at Pagan. Though more logical it would be difficult to visit the monuments in chronological order, so we here offer three circuits. The first, Inner Circuit, may be made by foot, bicycle or horse cart. The other two by car or bus.

1) **Inner Circuit**

Ananda

The most uplifting of Pagan temples, the Ananda is a fitting place to start any exploration of monuments. Built by Kyanzittha at the 11th century the Ananda represents the maturity of the Early Period style. Based on a single story elevation, it is a balanced and harmonious design with its central spire rising from square base and terraces. The true effect is best seen from the west side where 19th century donors have not added covered walk ways.The plan is a greek cross one with a 200 foot square dissected by prayer hall arms that project out from the central block at the cardinal points. Opposite the halls are the shrines set in giant arched niches cut into the block and containing colossal standing buddhas Only the south image is original Early Period; the others Konbaung replacements. Note the splendid 19th century wood carved doors on entering the outer ambulatory. Fragments of the original paintings have been resurrected in the halls —- the remainder, that would have coated walls and vaults, were in another cen-

tury white washed over by misguided do-gooders. There is a double ambulatory running around the main block over which the terraces climb. The terraces contain glazed plaque scenes of the Jatakas. Around the base are further glazed plaques depicting the attack and defeat of the Army of Mara (the devil who tried to tempt the Buddha just before his enlightenment). The outer ambulatory contains 90 relief scenes from the life of the Buddha. This was a time when people were converting to the new faith and these scenes were intended to teach the Buddha story. The stone carving is vigorous and at times dynamic. As with the entire building there is an energy and excitement to these scenes. The Ananda is monument to the establishment of Theravada as the state religion of Burma. There is none of the grand complacency of the colossal Late Temples: the place vibrates with the force of a new found faith.

That-byin-nyu

A short walk from the Ananda on the inside of the city wall stands the 'Omniscient'. This magnificent temple was the work of Sithu I and may date from the mid part of the 12th century. Longitudinal rather than square in plan the Pagan architect seemed to be no longer interested in the equilibrious single story type that reached perfection in the Ananda. Now the Pagan architect, confident and adventurous, is obsessed with scaling new heights. The main shrine is housed in the giant cube of the upper level and reached by a central stair. Ambulatorys run round the entresol level and once acted as accommodation for monks. The main image is a 14th century replacement.

Shwe-hsan-daw

The 'Golden Hair Relic' stupa was built, c.1050s, by King Anawratha after his conquest of the Mon country in the south. It is raised on a square base with five terraces and medial stair ways. In the precinct the later Shwe-thalyaung reclining Buddha is housed. This represents the

Buddha at the moment of his *parinibbana* or 'final extinction'.

Nan-hpaya
This small, delightful temple is one of only two stone built temples at Pagan. Stone was a rare and costly medium and after this work was only to be used for sculpture. The ornament around the building and the perforated windows are exquisite. The same designs and motifs were used in the stucco work in which Pagan craftsmen excelled. Within, the main image was most likely a standing Buddha and is now lost. On the four square piers adjacent to the shrine are very beautiful stone reliefs of Brahma; on the other faces of the piers are equally fine decorative motifs (*jatamukha*).

Myinkaba Ku-byauk-kyi
Dedicated by Prince Rajakumar in 1113 AD, this temple contains the best preserved of Early Period paintings at Pagan. Before entering note the grace and poise of this 'cave'. Here is the perfect Early Period smaller temple: brick covered in stucco that it carved to form elegant but restrained designs to define pilasters, pediments and architrave. The plan is a square base with a rectangular hall projecting east; there is a central block within which a dark shrine -niche contains a colossal seated buddha, again built of brick; an ambulatory, with lean-too vault, runs round this block the admittance of light restrained by elaborate stone carved perforations in each of the three windows on the N,S and E sides. The paintings are bold and colourful: the hall ones are near lost; flanking the shrine are bodhisattva guardians and seem to be transported from Tibet or Nepal and perhaps their artist came from the north to serve Prince Rajakumar. They may be lords of the Mahayana but they are here to protect the Theravada. For the Kubyauk-gyi is a pictorial library of Theravada texts, newly arrived from Ceylon. Narrated on the walls, with

captions in the old Mon script,the story of the life and past lives of the Buddha and the doctrinal development and history of the early Buddhist church are traced in panels running round the ambulatory. On the inside west wall (behind the shrine) the Attack and Defeat of the Army of Mara are portrayed — an extravaganza of elephants, tigers, and mythological beasts.

Mya-zedi

The original dedicatory inscription for Rajakumar's Kubyauk-gyi is housed in the precinct of the village pagoda set just east of the actual temple. Often described as the 'Rosetta Stone of Burma' in this quadralingular stone inscription Burmese as a script is written for the first time alongside Pyu, Mon, and Pali. The inscription was excavated in 1917 and is a highly poetic description of the dedication of the Kubyauk-gyi and glebe lands for its maintenance.

Mingala-zedi

Was built in 1284 by Narathihapati, the last of the Pagan kings was one of the last to be built before the Mongol invasion of 1287.

Taking six years to build, the Minglazedi is an elegant well finished stupa, finely proportioned and exquisitely decorated. Unglazed terracotta tiles adorn the three square terrace portraying the Jataka legends. Many have been damaged or stolen. It is extraordinary that so splendid and complete a monument should pre-date the demise of Pagan by a mere three years. A glance at this work reveals little decline in the arts — the Mingalazedi is hardly the work of a waning civilisation

Myi-nye-gon

This late period temple, situated close to the Archaeological Museum, proved an excellent view point

for observing and photographing the monuments — capturing the density and profusion of the western sector.

2) Outer Circuit

Shwe-zigon
This great stupa stands on the Pagan-Nyaung-Oo road and is the most famous of the Pagan stupas and still a popular national shrine being constantly added to by the pious. It is the venue for an important national festival and the maidan area about it then fills with a great bamboo camp. Begun by Anawratha and completed by Kyanzittha this was an Early Period work. The seven terraces rise on a square base and have original glazed votive plaques, now in eroded condition. The superstructure was remodelled in the Ava period, perhaps following an earth quake. At the cardinal points are detached temple-shrines each containing a 13 ft high standing bronze buddha, the four lords of the present era (*bhadrakalpa*). These are in the Early Period style. In the precinct is a house containing the 37 nats. The chronicles describe how Kyanzittha, in his purification of Buddhism, had them 'contained' here. There are a number of other 'divine' curiosities to be found in the precinct guarding the great stupa and the faith it upholds.

Wetkyi-in Kubyauk-gyi
There is no date for the 'Great Colourful Cave' at Wetkyi-in, although it is certainly from the Late Period (1170-1300). This temple is sited on a rise on the Pagan plain and orientated towards the east. In Pagan times the planting of trees in the enclosure could be an integral part of any dedication and here the heirs of the original palms rise high, naturalistically framing the temple. Those paintings that escaped robbery are in excellent condition. The earlier practice of distinguishing between the shrine and hall has, on the interior, been eliminated, and this area develops into a well lit hall where the paintings are intended to be seen and the glosses read. This temple was conceived to be an educational experience, not a mystical one. The

artist has laid out a clear programme, illustrating the doctrine and history of the religion across the open wall space. The paintings are in the hall whilst the other shrines, which contain no narrative paintings, are reduced to mere apses. All is concentrated on the hall-shrine.

Hti-lo-minlo

The Htilo-minlo majestically commands the road between Pagan village and Nyaung-U. Nadaungmya (1211-30), who was known as Htilominlo, modelled it on his father's great work, the Sula-mani. Thus this work may be dated to shortly after 1211. Of particular interest here is the perfection of the stucco: richly textured, animated and often naturalistic, it never attempts to over-embellish, rather it serves at all times to highlight those architectural subtleties that might so easily be overlooked.

Dhamma-yan-gyi

The one contemporary inscription that records the dedication of the Dhamma-yan-gyi is found in the north hall of the temple and dates to 1165. Its author was the Middle Princess Ajawlat, perhaps a daughter of Sithu I — however this dedication makes no mention of who the builder was. What Ajawlat's inscription does is date the temple's construction to before 1165 which means that it must have been begun during the reign of King Sithu I.

The Dhamma-yan-gyi itself was never completed, possibly after Sithu's death interest in the building of so great a temple dwindled. The plan of the temple is very similar to that of the Ananda temple — using a Greek Cross type of ground plan. Though built well within the Middle Period the Dhamma-yan-gyi in pan, but not in elevation, marks a return of the Ananda type that dates from the Early Period. The Dhamma-yan-gyi, being the largest temple in Pagan dominates any Pagan vista, and local people fear its wrath — they tell tales of great ghosts patrolling the ambulatories after each day's quick, tropical dusk.

3) Minnanthu

This is a typical 'Dry Zone' village with its perimeter hedge of thorns and tall gates to keep out the tigers and dacoits that were once prevalent in this area. The community is a farming one, the main crop being peanuts that the farmers grind to produce a rich oil sold all over Burma and used for cooking curries. Nothing is wasted, for the husks and waste from the oil presses are then dried to produce feed for the bullocks that turn the press. Minnanthu is at the south-west most extremity of the archaeological zone; most of the dedications here date from the 13th century or Late Period.

Hpaya-thon-zu
The 'Three Sacred Lords' contain a spectacular scheme of mural paintings that were uncompleted, perhaps as a result of the Mongol incursion in 1278. The paintings are very intricate in design and detail. Here the pantheon of Hindu-Buddhist divinities are flamboyantly manifest about the arches and on the vaults.

Tayok-pye
The superstructure lacks the usual Pagan type of finial, apparently because this was the work of the king 'Tayok-pye' or 'Mongol-runner' who in his haste to escape the Tartars left his work of merit unfinished. Raised on an artificial mound and set within a high walled enclosure this is a splendid example of the Late Period temple with broad open arches and high vaults. From the upper terraces one of the best views of Pagan may be had, revealing the majesty of the plain in its entirety.

Pakokku **West Bank, 510 Miles**

Pakokku is one of the largest and most prosperous cities in mid-Burma. The current population is approximately 200,000. It is a port city set just south of the Chindwin confluence and commands an agriculturally rich hinterland between the two great rivers. Pakokku is thus an important trading city through which most Upper Burmese commodities are shipped: rice and jaggery; beans, nuts and pulse; raw and spun cotton, *thaneka* branches for the manufacture of make u; tobacco and cheroots. In addition to the state-owned Duya cigarette factory, there are numerous smaller manufactuaries — mostly highly productive cottage industries. On a walk through the broad tree shaded streets you will find businesses making anything from sandals to cheroots. Pakokku is famous for its weaving industry — particularly the local *pyinni* or homespun cotton which is spun and woven into longyis and blankets. Pakokku benefits from no international aid or bank credits, yet its people are quietly busy and prosperous, beneficiaries of and beneficiaries to a rich domestic economy the common thread for which is the river. The 2nd World War landing strip is now a golf course. A railway has recently opened connecting Pakokku with Monywa and the Chindwin valley and it will eventually extend up to the Indian border. The market occupies the central area of the city and is usually closed on the frequent religious holidays that litter the Burmese calender.

In addition to trade, Pakokku is well known for its great collegiate monasteries and schools of philosophy. The **Shwe Gu -gyi** is contains a *ta-ge* teak-carved reredos about an image of the Buddha. The carving consists of elaborate and intricate motifs in high, almost multi-dimensional, relief. The most important temple is the **Thi-ho-shin** that was built by the Pagan king Sithu I (Alaungsithu) to house an important image brought to Burma from Ceylon. Flanked by two other images it is now disfigured from centuries of re-gilding. About the shrine are ten other standing images each said to be

carved from ten different types of wood. The pagoda precinct is an attractive place with various rest houses and lesser stupas. In one small *gu* or temple there are spectacular Konbaung Period wall paintings.

A few miles upstream from Pakokku is the village and important religious complex of **Shwe-tan-tit**. Sometimes it is necessary to moor here as in low water the Pakokku channels can block or be to shallow for safe passage. Then we hire a rickety bus to take us into town along the most terrible road imaginable. The main pagoda houses a much revered relic that the trustees may kindly expose for the benefit of visitors from the depths of an antique bank safe. Dripping with rubies the size of gum drops the relics are accorded great powers and people travel from afar to enjoy their efficacy. There is also a monastery at Shwe-tan-tit, but most interesting of all is a brick *zayat* or rest house set a short distance east of the sanctuary. This contains wonderful paintings of the life of the Buddha dating from the early colonial period. Painted in a traditional court style they incorporate recent Western innovations: railways, Indian Army sepoys under command of white officers, and best of all steam ships bearing the IFC colours. Note the young Prince Siddartha seated at his English style banqueting table beneath electric fans. Such benefits of colonial rule as Jacob's cream crackers and Horlicks are proudly displayed.

Sameikkon **East Bank, 573 Miles**

As you will see from the many splendid colonial merchants houses this was once an important trading post during colonial times. Sameikkon is situated close to the confluence of the Chindwin and is connected by road to the town of Myingyan. The village now has a population of approximately 6,000 — who reside in 1500 houses.

Typical of such small villages in Burma, there is no running water or electricity mains. However, as is also typical of small villages in Burma, there is an efficient schooling system and on our visits we are usually met by one of the school teachers who proudly conduct us about the primary and secondary schools. The word for school in Burmese is *kyaung* which is also the word for monastery, the traditional schools of Burma. Sameikkon, as befits so prosperous a settlement, has several monasteries situated across a stream that floods into a lake during the rains. At such times the village would be cut off from the monasteries they support and just as the monks might be denied sustenance the good folk might be denied merit. This practical and spiritual difficulty was resolved by the construction of extensive teak foot bridges carried by vertical teak piers. It is similar to the U Pein Bridge at Amarapura and though covering a shorter distance equally picturesque. On the west side of the bridge is a splendid, if ruined, monastery. The columns and halls decorated with glass mosaic as was fashionable at the late 19th century Konbaung court. Near here a favourite stop on a village walk is the condensed milk factory. The condensing is done in old British cast iron bath tubs with furnaces constructed beneath. The rather fat lady who commands this enterprise tells how her product is exported up and down the river to be sold to tea houses who use it as a vital ingredient in the national drink *le-pay-yei* a tea-come-syrup of awesome sweetness. Most hot countries turn their milk production into cheese, yogurt or lassi. The Burmese make a condensed milk so sweet that even Nestlé would shudder.

Sagaing **West Bank , 604 Miles**

"...if it has no great place in history, it retains, for it can

never loose the glory of its site. ...The great stream here narrows to a thousand yards, between cliffs which the architectural instinct of the people crowned with flights of pagodas. There are few richer landscapes in the world..."

VC Scott O'Connor *Mandalay...*
1907

Burma is a land of former capitals — there are at least half a dozen significant ones; sometimes kings upped and shifted their palace cities like general's moving camp. Sagaing's tenure dates from the anarchic period following the disintegration of the Pagan empire in the 14th Century. The Shan chieftain Athinkhaya Swayun founded the city in 1315 but the capital was relocated again 50 years later by Thadominbya. Sagaing was briefly capital again between 1760-64. There are no vestiges of the former palace-city but the vicinity abounds with royally endowed pagodas. The **Htu-payon,** by Narapatigyi (1443-1469) and restored by King Pagan in 1849 following the 1838 earthquake, is in the heart of the town. A few miles north is the great **Kaung-hmu-daw** that sighted from many miles downstream warns of our imminent arrival. The Kaung-hmu-daw was built by King Thalun in 1636 and has a giant dome of 151ft high. Rarely visited by tourists are the **Thilawa-guru** caves that date from the reign of the 2nd Ava Dynasty king Narawara. This is the first example of mural painting surviving from after the fall of Pagan. In excellent condition they are far cruder and more primitive than the flamboyant and virtuoso late Pagan style. The detailed depiction of court costume and jewellry, palace and monastic architecture, offer a glimpse of life during a period that otherwise we know little of.

Today the modern town is sleepy and provincial: a bund runs along the river bank; Anglo-Indian administrative buildings doze in a forgotten world of post-colonial bureaucracy; saw mills are stacked with teak tree trunks; and a railway station dozes in the heat with its lines

branching off to Monywa and Myitkyina. There is an area of silver workshops that is becoming something of a tourist trap.

The true delight and interest of Sagaing lies in the hills beyond. Clad with magnolia and frangipani, they are home to several thousand religious dedications. Notable are: the **Ponnyashin** stupa, that commands a good view across the river to Ava and Amarapura, originally built in 1300 by a monk, Padaung Thingayaza; **Umin Thonze** or 30 caves — a crescent shaped colonnade of seated buddha images. But these are for the tourists. Instead, wander through the many miles of interconnecting covered stairs and walkways that connect hill top pagoda to hill top pagoda through lost valleys filled with nunneries, pilgrim houses, and hermitages. No one has ever counted the number of *kyaung* hidden in these fragrant hills. For centuries a place for spiritual retreat and meditation, far yet close to the great former capitals that stood across the river, the Sagaing Hills significantly developed during the colonial period. Mandalay families, made rich from Burma's first opening up, would here dedicate monastic houses for their favourite monks. These houses can be grand, almost 'stately homes' in appearance. Built in a classical manner, incorporating traditional Buddhist decorative features most are still occupied if only by one or two monks and the occasional novice. The newly wealthy of Mandalay continue to dedicate works of merit in these hills and between chants and reverberating gongs masons may be heard tapping away. To this day in Burma a rich man will live above his shop whilst the monks he supports in a palace.

Ava Bridge

Constructed by the colonial government in 1934 as both a rail and road bridge, the Ava Bridge it was destroyed as an act of denial against the Japanese in 1942. It was rebuilt in 1954 and until the Prome bridge opens remains the only

bridge across the Irrawaddy. There is an elaborate toll system whereby a ticket is sold at one end, and in case one's vehicle drops in from the sky, scrupulously checked at the other.

Amarapura **3 Miles**
Inland

Amarapura is a classical Pali name and means 'The City of Immortals'. Founded by King Bodawpaya in1783, the year after he came to the throne, and it superseded Ava as capital of the Konbaung empire. Bodawpaya died in 1819 and his grandson Bagyidaw shifted the capital back again to Ava in 1823. In 1841, during the reign of Tharrawaddy (the brother of Bagyidaw),the capital reverted to Amarapura. In 1857 King Mindon ostensibly for astrological reasons moved the palace-city to a new site at Mandalay.

When a king moved capital the teak pavilions containing the great chambers of state, audience halls, parliament, private royal apartments not to mention government offices, military barracks, stables for horse and elephant, and apartments for courtiers, officers of state and civil servants were all dismantled and re-erected at the new site. For this reason there is little to see of the original palace and even the original walls have been lost to road and railway makers needing brick. The palace was photographed though in 1855 by Captain Lineaus Tripe, a member of Col Henry Yule's mission and there are sketches by Colesworthy Grant. One photo shows a stockade used for breaking wild elephants. In all the picture is a spectacular one for Amarapura was founded when the Burmese empire was unchallenged and at its zenith.

Nowadays Amarapura is a suburb attached to the south of present day Mandalay. The area is populated by craftsmen who, in a legacy from royal times, when people lived by royal order in occupation defined communities, still

live in the quarters given to them by King Mindon. Thus south of the Maha-muni along the road to Amarapura there are quarters for: stone carvers, wood carvers, bronze casters and in the heart of Amarapura itself a community of silk weavers.

There is a Chinese temple, or Joss House as they were known in the old days, that is mentioned in Yule's *Narrative.* According to Symes writing in 1795 Italian missionaries had introduced the grape and wine was made here. A century later Scott O'Connor's noted that vines still adorned people's verandas. Along the Joss House road, once known as the Street of Ambassadors, shoeless British envoys trod towards the palace-city with all its might and pomp, fearful that they might never see St James' Palace again. Amarapura was the invention of Bodaw-hpaya a megalomanial king who having defeated the Arakanese in 1786 set his eyes on Siam and British India. In 1795 the British envoy Captain Symes recorded his arrival by water:

"the sun shone full upon the hill, and its reflected rays displayed the scenery to the highest advantage. On entering the lake, the number of boats that were moored, as in a harbour to avoid the influence of the sweeping flood, the height of the waters, ... and the amphitheatre of lofty hills that nearly surrounded us altogether presented a novel scene exceedingly interesting to a stranger."

The **Taung-thaman Lake** when filled with water remains the wonder Symes describes. But today atmosphere is more Arcadian than forbidding and where the palace once stood are cottage industries, monasteries and picturesque pagodas. The lake is now dissected by the **U Pein Bridge** constructed as an act of merit by the mayor U Pein in 1854 from the leftovers of the Ava Palace. This 3/4 mile long bridge is, not unsurprisingly, the longest teak bridge in the world. Opposite the palace and reached by the

bridge is the **Kyauktaw-gyi Pagoda** built by King Pagan in 1847 and modelled on the Greek Cross plan of the Ananda Temple at Pagan. Mural paintings of Buddhist cosmology are to be found on the vaults of the four halls and portrayals of Pagan-min's works of merit along the walls. Note the earliest portrayals of big nosed foreigners in Burmese art. The Kyauk-taw-gyi is the best preserved of the numerous religious buildings in the deserted capital of Amarapura. Close by to here was the original British residency where Symes was made to wait two months to gain an audience.

There are various royal pagodas that have survived where the palace has not. The **Pato-daw-gyi** by King Bagyidaw (1820) has a collection of marble plaques, with Jataka scenes incised onto them, running round the terraces. These are in a Siamese style reflecting recent Burmese conquests and the capture and establishment of Thai artists at the court. Siamese style painting is also evident during this period though lost at Amarapura they may be found in redecoration schemes of the Sulamani and Upali Thein at Pagan.

East of the palace area, on the river bank opposite Sagaing we often moor beneath the twin pagodas of **Shwe-kye-yet** and **Shwe-kye-yet-kya.** These are believed to have been erected by a Pagan king in the 12th century. No place could be more fitting to return to after an afternoon's pottering in lost cities. The thousand white pagodas of the Sagaing Hills twinkle across the lapis coloured river and the Shwe-kye-yet pagodas high on the buff above guard the river approach to Mandalay.

Ava **East Bank, 604 Miles**

"And here it may be said that of all the ruined capitals of

Burma which make their appeal on behalf of the transitoriness of life...Ava is the most gracious".

VC SCOTT O'CONNOR *Mandalay...*
1907

Ratanapura, City of Gems, Ava or *Inwa* was the intermittent capital of Burma between the decline of Pagan around 1300 and the final move to Amarapura in 1837. However it was not till Thalun's decision to move the capital from Toungoo to Ava in 1637 that it truly became the centre of power until 1752 when it was sacked by the Mons. Following the rise of a new Burmese dynasty, the Konbaung in 1756, Hsinbyushin moved the capital back. Even after 1837 the Burmese kings were still referred to as the King's of Ava.

Situated on the confluence of the Irrawaddy and Myitnge rivers the place was easily defended and today makes a pleasant excursion. The city follows the classic Burmese city plan: fortified with zig zag walls and surrounded by artificial moats linked to the two rivers. The brick walls are still evident, though tumbled down in part. Of the original palace, state offices and regimental quarters little survives, as they were made of wood and relocated to Amarapura in 1837. The area is now under farmland and a horse cart ride through the paddy fields from monument to monument gives a pleasant glimpse of life in rural Burma.

Menu-ok Kyaung Monastery

The 'Brick Monastery of Queen Menu' which was originally called the Maha Aungmye Bonzan was built in 1818 by Bagyidaw's chief queen for her teacher the Nyaungyan Sayadaw. The structure was badly damaged in an earthquake in 1838 and was repaired by her daughter Hsinbyumashin who was a queen of Mindon. Though brick built, it is in fact in the style of a wooden monastery.

Bagaya-Kaung-Taik Monastery
This is a less well known teak monastery dating from the early 19th Century and is in excellent condition. It is a working monastery so visitors are therefore requested to be decorous and silent. The exterior carvings are now lost but the interiors retain their splendour. The apartments and pavilions rise from a teak deck, the entire structure carried by 267 teak columns.

A mile south of the city is the fort built by Mindon under the supervision of Italian military engineers that forms a triangle with the one opposite at Sagaing an the one just next to the Ava bridge. A brick causeway runs from the former south gate towards Pinya, a former Shan capital. The **Nan-myin** or watch tower is 90feet high and has been restored more recently after the 1838 earthquake damage.

Mandalay **East Bank, 613 Miles**

Though Rangoon is the modern day capital Mandalay, or *Yadanapura* — the 'City of Gems', remains the Golden Land's spiritual capital. To know Mandalay and its pleasant surrounds is to know Burma. Situated in the heart of Upper Burma the city is at the hub of river routes from China and India and land routes from the Shan massif and Siam beyond. The city throbs with life and trade. This is a city of markets and monasteries is no touristic backwater. As well as being the economic epicentre of Upper Burma Mandalay is the religious capital of Burma There as many living monasteries and pagodas as Pagan has dead ones and the monastic population numbers over 100,000. The present city covers an area of 25 square miles and is rapidly growing.

Yet Mandalay is a relatively recent creation. One story tells that King Mindon decided to move the capital to a new site from Amarapura in 1856 because the Irrawaddy Flotilla Company steamers kept him awake at night with their whistles! The reality is that Mindon, a moderniser and reformer, was anxious to break with the past and establish a new era of peace and prosperity for Burma following the humiliation of the two British annexations. This was symbolised by the construction of a splendid new capital. The palace-city, that also housed government offices and personnel and military regiments, was vast. The original moat and walls a mile and a half on each side still stand with their splendid *pyatthat* spires over each gate. Within lay the 'forbidden city' — an elaborate system of teak pavilions, throne rooms and halls. Tragically this was destroyed by an incendiary bomb in the Second World War but it has now been meticulously reconstructed to give an impression of the awesome scale of the royal palace and its sumptuous decoration of gold leaf and lacquer.

Around the palace area the devout king lavished dona-

tion upon donation constructing splendid teak monasteries for the royal monks, rest houses for pilgrims, shrines on the Mandalay hill and most significantly the great Kuthodaw Pagoda. The Kuthodaw is rightly said to be the world's largest book as here the king had the Buddhist scriptures inscribed on 1,774 marble slabs, each housed in its own private pavilion. These many dedications may be visited today and truly conjure an image of the strange mix between opulence and obeisance that existed in royal Burma.

The British captured Mandalay in 1885 following a campaign for control of the Irrawaddy and on 1st January 1886 the Burmese empire was formally annexed by Lord Randolph Churchill as he rose his glass at the stroke of midnight. The royal palace was renamed Fort Dufferin and a new city on a grid plan was laid out to the southwest of the palace-city extending to the river bank and its important port. This plan remains to this day though sadly many of the old colonial buildings have been lost — either in the war, fire or 1990s developers. Glimpses of the old colonial city may still be seen, particularly in the downtown area around the Mahamuni Hpaya-gyi — the city's principal shrine.

Mandalay has air, rail, road and river connections to the rest of Burma and the airport now receives international flights. The city has a large and growing Chinese community and a trip to China Town to see the market can be a lively experience. Mandalay is a good base from which to explore the rest of Upper Burma and the delightful hill station of Pyin-oo-lwin or Maymyo is a morning's drive away. Northwards the great gorges of the upper river lead the more intrepid traveller to Bhamo, the historic gateway to China.

Mandalay Palace

Founded in 1855 by Mindon Min it took only two years to complete. Known as the Centre of the Universe, it is a per-

fect square, each wall 1 1/4 miles long. The 25 ft high walls, 225 ft wide moat and certain of the 48 *pyatthat* spires are original There are twelve gates in all, three to each side. This impressive sight still dominates the city centre. When Mandalay was captured the palace was renamed Fort Dufferin and later became a club for colonials. Lord Curzon, Viceroy of India, on visiting Mandalay realised its importance and had the palace declared a national museum and the club moved elsewhere. In the Second World War the original palace, made of wood, was destroyed by Allied bombs as it housed the Japanese HQ.

The clock tower, certain garden pavilions, the royal mint and Mindon's tomb also date from the Konbaung period. Otherwise the palace itself, standing at the centre of the enclosure, protected by an inner wall and raised on a platform above the outer enclosure, is a recent reconstruction. Faithful to the original design an impression may be had of the elaborateness and extent of a Burmese royal palace with several throne rooms, audience halls and mini-palaces for each of the four queens. No reconstruction could ever recapture the splendour and extravagance of the original, described by Victorian travellers, with its columns and walls covered in real gold leaf and fantastic wood carvings. In the outer enclosure the offices and organs of state were housed as were their incumbents; the royal guards, cavalry and elephantry were also stationed here. Nowadays this vast enclosure remains the preserve of the military, heirs to the British civil and military lines; there is even a golf course.

Mandalay Hill

Much of the joy and interest of visiting the Mandalay Hill has been lost through the construction of a car road to just below the summit and then elevators and escalators for the final ascent. These good deeds were the work of the army who like other Burmese Buddhists also have a great need to earn merit and have the means at their disposal to

achieve such ambitious projects. To climb the 954ft high hill by foot up the 1,729 steps, is hard work and best undertaken in the early morning or early evening. Great views unfold and eventually the Irrawaddy, beyond the palace and modern city, filtering down from the north through a thousand channels and islands is visible. The summit pagoda is of little historic interest and has been much redecorated. On the way up a large standing Buddha, the **Shwe-yat-daw** dedicated by Mindon guards the foot, his right hand pointing at the city below. Covered walkways follow the ridges; along them shrines to nats, ogres and various deities abound and vendors sell flowers and religious offerings to the pious and refreshments to the breathless. The hill is a popular place for astrologers and fortune tellers, many of whom are descended from the Manipuri *ponna* or brahmins who served the royal court. At the hill's foot, on the south west side are the **Peshwar Buddha Relics** donated to the Burmese people by the Archaeological Survey of India in 1909. On the south (city) side of the hill are seven *zayat* or rest houses built by Mindon for the pilgrims. Mandalay Hill would not seem to have been a particularly popular pilgrim spot till Mindon set his eyes on it. Around hill foot on the south side are a collection of monasteries and pagodas dedicated by the pious king as part of his new order of things.

Atu-ma-shi

Built by Mindon in 1857 the 'Incomparable' monastery betrays the influence of Italian architects then working at court. Destroyed by fire in 1890 the present government have rebuilt it according to the original plans. The base was brick and consisted of a large square platform carried by very Italianate colonnades with medial flights of stairs, this survived the fire. Above, lost in the fire, was a giant tiered pavilion made from wood but stuccoed over to give the appearance of masonry.

Shwe-nan-daw Kyaung
The Shwe-kyaung or 'Golden Monastery' as it is known locally is at long last undergoing restoration. This was the palace apartment where King Mindon died in 1878. In 1880 King Thibaw had it moved to its present location and dedicated it as a monastery. Thus, it is the only surviving palace apartment, and a revealing glimpse of what the original palace must have looked like. The *palin* or throne for the Buddha is of the type used by a king. The interior is lacquered and gilded and there are fine wood carvings on the exterior and within.

Kuthodaw Pagoda
Known as 'The world's biggest book' this pagoda commemorates the 5th Buddhist Synod of 1871-2 convened by King Mindon at Mandalay. There are 729 marble monoliths, each inscribed with a page from the sacred texts or *Tipitika and* each housed in its own pagoda set in rows around a central stupa.

Yakhine Maha-myat-muni Hpaya-gyi
Mandalay's most important temple, the Hpaya-gyi houses the country's most sacred image which was captured from Arakan (Yakhine) in 1784 by King Bodaw-hpaya (who built the unfinished Mingun Pagoda. Arakan was then an independent kingdom and the Great Image, 12.5 ft high and heavily encrusted with gold, represented the sacred heart of this land. Its capture was thus symbolic of a spiritual as well as political subjugation of the Arakan. The shrine is one of the most famous in Burma and an emblematic statement of Burmese nationhood at its most militant

The original temple was destroyed by fire in 1884 and the present pagoda, with its terraced roof of gilded stucco, is of early 20th century construction. In the courtyard is a small building housing six bronze figures — Khmer statues brought back from Arakan State at the same time as the Maha Muni image. There were originally 30 figures, but the other 24 were melted down by King Thibaw and cast into cannons for his struggle against the British.

Mingun **West Bank, 6 Miles**

The **Mingun Pagoda** is unfinished and is said to be the largest pile of bricks in the world. The work of merit of King Bodaw-hpay, it was begun in 1790 and was intended to be the largest Buddhist structure ever built — 492 feet high. Bodaw-hpaya was a wily megalomaniac and whilst the construction of the pagoda economically devastated his kingdom he clung to power. The project was abandoned in 1813 when the block had reached a height of 162 feet. The 1838 earthquake caused the great crack that is visible from afar. Set close to the pagoda is the **Mingun Bell**, the largest working bell in the world: 12 foot high and weighing 90 tons; the outer lip diameter is over 16 feet

wide. Both Pagoda and bell are to be found in the Guiness Book of Records.

TO BE CONTINUED UPSTREAM
IN THE NEXT EDITION.
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Facts and Figures

Periods of Burma's History

Period:	Early Mon	
Dates:	? — 11th C	
Capitals:	Thaton and vaious coastal city states	
Kings:	Manuha 11th C (captured by Anawratha of Pagan	
Period:	Pyu	
Dates:	? — 9th C	
Capitals:	Thareyakittiya, Beikthanmyo, Halin-gyi and other city states in the Irrawaddy Valley	
Kings:	Vikrama line (known from inscriptions on funerary unrns)	
Period:	Pagan	
Dates:	1044 -1287	
Capitals:	Pagan	
Kings:	Anawratha	1044-77
	Sawlu	1077-84
	Kyanzittha	1084-1112
	Sithu I	1112-67 (Alaungsithu)
	Sithu II	1173-1210 (Narapatisithu)
	Htilominlo	1210-34
	Kyawswa	1234-50
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	Narathihapate	1254-87
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Dates:	fall of Pagan to 1555	
Capitals:	Pinya, Sagaing, Ava	
Kings:	various	
Period:	Toungoo	
Dates:	1531-1752	
Capitals:	Pegu till 1635, thereafter Ava	
Kings:	Tabinshwehti	1531-50
	Bayinnaung	1551-81
	Anaukpetlun	1605-28

	Thalun	1629-48	
	Pindale	1648-61	
	Pye	1661-72	
	Minrekyawdin	1673-98	
	Taninganwe	1714-33	
	Mahadammayaza-dipati	1733-52	
Periods:	Konbaung		
Dates:	1752-1885		
Capitals:	Shwebo	1752-65	
	Ava	1765-82, 1823-37	
	Amarapura		1782-1823, 1837-57
	Mandalay	1857-85	
Kings:	Alaungpaya		1752-60
	Naungdawgyi	1760-3	
	Hsinbyushin	1763-76	
	Bodawpaya		1782-1819
	Bagyidaw	1819-37	
	Tharrawaddy	1837-46	
	Pagan	1846-53	
	Mindon	1853-78	
	Thibaw	1875-85	

Burma Directory

In alphabetical order

Army	known in Burmese as the Tat-ma-daw;s one of the largest per capita in Asia with over 250,000 men
Administration	seven states: Arakan, Chin, Kachin, Karen, Kayah, Mon, Shan, and seven divisions: Irrawaddy, Magwe, Mandalay, Pegu, Rangoon, Sagaing, Tenasserim
Area	261, 218 square miles (676, 522 square kilometers)
Climatic Zones	Lower Burma has lower temperatures and higher humidity creating a tropical environment; Upper Burma is hotter with little humidity creating an arid environment
Curreny	the kyat; the official rate is approx 6K to the US$, the 'open market' rate is far more
Dating System	Burmese Era or BE starts 638 years later than AD. This year is thus 1358 BE. The Burmese calander is a lunar one with lunation periods alternating between 29 and 30 days. Seven intercalary months are required in 19 years to make up the difference. Each month divided into 2 periods — waxing and waning.
Education	state primary and secondary schools offer free education in most towns and large villages; in smaller villages children are taught the 3Rs in the local monastery schools
Ethnic groups	the Burmese represent 67% of the population out of 135 different groups
Greatest length	north to south 1, 300 miles
Greatest width	east to west 600 miles
Languages	Burmese is spoken by 67% of population. There are several hundreds of languages and dialects classifiable into four main language families: Tai (Shan peoples), Austro-asiatic (Mon, Palaung, Wa),

	Malay-Polynesian (Salon and Moken spoken in the islands of the Mergui Archipelago), Sino-Tibetan (Burmese, Lolo, Kachin, Lahu, Akha, Lisu and others). Burmese has two forms — literary and colloquial, the former florid and and at times pompous and the latter more intimate and often ridden with slang. Throughout the Irrawaddy Valley Burmese has surprisingly little regional variation or accent, though a dialect is spoken in Arakan
National holidays	January 4th — Independence Day; February 12th — Union Day; March 2nd Peasant's Day; March — Full Moon of Tabaung; March 27th — Armed Forces Day; April 13th-16th Thingyan (New Year's Water Festival); April — Full moon of Kason; July — begining of Waso or Lent; July 19th — Martyr's Day; October — End of Lent with the Lighting Festival; November — Tazaung-daing Light Festival; November — National Day; December 25th — Christmas Day.
Politics	ruled by a military dictatorship called the State Law and Order Restoration Council (Slorc) who assumed power after a coup in 1988
Population	according to the 1983 census 35,310,000; a recent estimate is 43 million
Postage	for a post card is 5K
Highest Peak	Hkakabo Razi in Kachin State is 19, 314 feet
Script	Old Burmese was first written on the Myazedi stone inscription dated 1113. It is derived from the Mon script which in turn has South Indian Pallava origins. Nearly all the 33 consonant characters are formed by a circular movement that dates from the times of incising the script onto palm leaf manuscripts

Rainfall	200 inches per year in coastal areas whilst the Upper Burmese Dry Zone has only 25 inches a year
Seasons	Monsoon from mid-May to mid-October; Cool Season from mid-October to mid-March; Hot Season from mid-March to mid-May
Literacy	85% of the population
Telephones	IDD lines are now available at the cost of over £1000; cell phones are also available at similar costs; Siemens are installing a micro wave network across the country
Televisions	state controlled Myanmar TV with one channel; satellite TV with BBC World Service, Star, etc., is now available
Time	6.5 hours ahead of GMT
Religion	Theravada Buddhism is the state religion; other religions include: Christianity (Anglo Burmese, Karens and Kachins) , Moslem and Hindu (Indian and Yunnanese), Confucian (Chinese) and Animist (certain hill peoples)

Kiscadale 'Books about Burma'

Old Rangoon: City of the Shwedagon Noel Singer £30
Mandalay: Travels from the Golden City Paul Strachan £25
Burma: Encountering the Land of the Buddhas Ellis Everarda £17.99
Birmanie: (French edition of above)
£25
Burmah: a Photographic Journey, 1855-1925 Noel F Singer £25
Thangliena: the Life of TH Lewin John Whitehead £25
Inventory of Monuments at Pagan Vol.I-V Pierre Pichard £85
Nat-Pwe: Burma's Supernatural Subculture Yves Rodrigue £17.95
Pagan: Art and Architecture of Old Burma Paul Strachan £25
Scots in Burma: Golden Times... Alister McCrae £14.50
South-East Asia: Languages and Literatures P Herbert £14.50
Burmese National Movements MaungMaung £15.50

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Information for the River Traveller

On Board the Expedition Vessel

Expedition Team and Your Crew
Once on board you will be looked after by the Expedition Manager and your Guide. The Manager will do his best to make sure that you are as comfortable as possible on board whilst the Guide will handle on shore expeditions, daily briefings and other logistical matters. Both the Expedition Team and the Crew are here to ensure that you are as well looked after as is possible within the confines of an expedition vessel making pioneering journeys. We are open to all ideas and suggestions — any input will be gratefully received.

The Itinerary / Daily Schedule
You will already have a rough itinerary listing the main stops of the expedition. However, much depends on river conditions and other local factors, so we will post a detailed Daily Schedule each day — ideally the night before. Guests are asked to remain patient and flexible. We do our best to devise as interesting and exciting programmes as possible but, being an expedition, it is not always possible to follow itineraries to the letter. Please keep an eye on the Daily Schedule as in Burma all is subject to sudden and unexpected changes!

Daily Briefing
This will be hosted in the Salon most evenings by the Guide. This is an opportunity to discuss events, places visited and the expedition's progress with the Guide On selected days (when we are not exhausted after prolonged period ashore) the Guide will combine the briefing with a

talk, the subject to be announced on the Daily Schedule. Guests with an area of particular area of expertise or interest to the group are invited to offer a talk. Video and slide projection facilities are available.

River Conditions

These vary depending on the season. In the Cool Season (November-February) the water level of the river will be quite low and in places will have dropped more than 20 foot from its monsoon level (June-Sept). Though the river can be miles wide channels can be narrow and hard to follow. There is thus some risk of running aground on submerged sand banks and our captain has to take extreme care. For this reason it is often too risky to run at night and we tend to put to anchor from night fall till just before first light (about 5am). We will attempt to devise on shore time in the cool of the early morning or late afternoon.

Medical

We carry first aid equipment and some medicines. Fortunately on the river we are never far from a Burmese medical station and we have found that Burmese doctors usually speak English and practice a good standard of field medicine. In the booking conditions you were required to have taken out an insurance policy that includes repatriation in the event of a medical emergency. There are now modern private hospitals in the capital but upcountry hospitals can be poorly equipped.

General Ship's Safety

Please be especially careful on board the ship as by the nature of its design there are many things to trip on and surfaces can be slippery. Please bear in mind that you are on a ship not a hotel — watch the ledges in doorways and take extra care when moving around as metal floor surfaces can be slip. Care should be taken with the swing doors at each end of the corridor which are very strong.

Gangways
Because of the varying nature of the river bank the method of getting ashore may differ from time to time and on occasions access may be difficult. We will ensure the gangways are safe and that crew and team are on hand to assist you.

Emergency Procedures
Life jackets are to be found beneath your berth. In the event of an emergency the ship's siren will blast continually. If in or close to your cabin collect your life jacket if not we carry spares at the Muster Station. Proceed to B deck and move to the aft part of the ship to await instructions. Note whether your 'buddy' is present.

The Buddy System
This is a quick and easy system to help us check numbers whilst ashore and in an emergency. You will be allocated one or two buddies and a list will be posted on the notice boards. Please note who your buddy is. On purpose your buddy will not be your partner. At the emergency practice on the first day aboard you will be asked to check if your buddy is there. That way we can establish if a guest is missing.

Security
There is a safe in the Bar where valuables may be left in a security bag that you will find in your cabin. Please keep your cabin locked when not in use and lock the deck door at night. A watch is kept on the gangplank but we can not be held liable in the event of an item's loss. Burma is relatively crime free and as yet tourists are rarely targets for theft. However it is always best to play safe.

Hair Driers
Are available from the Bar.

Going Ashore

When moored you are welcome to come and go from the ship as much as you like. Our next sailing time will be advised on the Daily Schedule and passengers are requested to note this before disembarkation. On disembarking we request that you sign out on the special board. This way we can be sure not to sail without you. At 30 mins before departure you will hear 3 long blasts of the ship's whistle and on departure 5 short blasts.

Footwear
Rubber flip flops are provided for your comfort on board the vessel. When ashore guests should use easily removable footwear for visiting Buddhist sites.

Air Conditioners
Each cabin has its own air conditioner that can be set to your own preference. Some people are prone to sore throats and even colds after being out in the heat and entering an excessively cooled air conditioned environment. We find the best solution is to keep the machine on all the time setting the thermostat to low. That ensures a good circulation of air without becoming chilly. In the early hours of the morning the desert-like 'Dry Zone' of Upper Burma can be quite cold.

Mosquito Precautions
External doors and windows should be kept closed at all times — day and night. You will find an insect spray in your room to be used when you hear the shrill buzz of one that got in. At night, if on deck or going ashore make sure to rub ankles and other exposed parts with repellent. In the day time mosquitoes are less of a problem. Switch off lights when leaving your cabin so as not to lure them in. Mosquitoes love damp spots so it helps to keep the shower room door bolted shut with light off when not in use. Mosquitoe nets are available on request.

Water and Towels
The ship's water supply comes from the river after passing through a filtration plant. This water is suitable for washing but should not be drunk. Bottled mineral water is provided free for drinking. The ship's tanks have a limited capacity and we ask travellers to be sparing in use. Likewise to save water we will only change towels if they are placed on the floor.

Laundry
Is collected each morning when your room is made up and will be returned to you by the following day. Please leave items in the bags provided and mark up the list. The charges will go on your bill in US$. Our ever zealous dhobi has a tendency to iron absolutely everything. If there is an item that you do not wish ironed please advise us.

Post Cards and Stamps
A supply is available from the Ship's Shop. Outside Rangoon, Pagan and Mandalay opportunities to buy post cards are virtually non-existent. Cards may be handed in at the Ship's Office for posting.

The Bar and Wine List
You will be asked to sign for all items ordered and you will be presented with the bar bill on the last day aboard.

Drinking Water
Jugs of potable water from the cooler or bottles are available free of charge from the bar.

Food Safety and Hygiene
Bottled water is used for cooking and food preparation on board. Guests are welcome to eat ashore but should select an establishment that looks clean and well run. A good rule is that if the loo is clean then the kitchen is likely to be clean too. Please avoid eating at road side stalls, alluring as they can be. Off the vessel, never accept ice in drinks. Avoid ice creams, crushed sugar cane, salads and the skins of fruits. Common sense is the best prophylactic against dysentery.

Morning Call
If you would like to be called at any time please the night before sign the sheet on the notice board.

Buddhist Etiquette

Burmese are generally tolerant and easy going. The one thing that does cause upset is any form of disrespect for the national religion, Buddhism. Unlike many faiths, the Burmese Buddhists make their temples open to us foreigners, permitting the snapping of cameras and invasion of their sacred space. They ask only one thing. That we take our shoes off. Even socks are forbidden. In addition to taking shoes and socks off in temples please observe the following:

— try not to point with your feet or in the company of monks or elders cross your legs.
— do not touch people on the head or upper body
— when beckoning someone to come over do not flap your hand in the standard Western 'come here' motion; instead turn the hand round so that your palm flaps down towards yourself
— don't shake hands with monks or nuns and women in Upper Burma rarely shake hands; rather smile and nod away
— females should never sit down next to a monk
— shorts and skirts should be longish; for both sexes it is OK to expose arms

Donation

The Burmese are a giving people. Burmese Buddhist culture revolves around the redistribution of wealth and subsequent earning of merit. The price of your holiday includes entrance fees to all major temples and sites and part of your 'tip money' goes to help less well known dedications. If you feel like donating to an individual, like a monk, nun or established mendicant, or an institution, like a pagoda or a monastery, that is very much in tune with Burmese Buddhist culture. However, we ask you not to give money to children. Burma has little experience of

tourism and already in certain places, like Mingun, the children have been quick to spoil. Ball point pens, picture post cards of foreign places and other such nick knacks are preferable. In the remoter places we stop we pool presents and donate them to the village school or monastery.

Buying Things
The Burmese do not bargain much. The best technique is to ask for a discount as if you are asking for a favour. As said, outside the tourist centres you will need kyats, not dollars.

Tipping
Rather than tip the staff, drivers and guides on a daily basis we suggest that if satisfied with the service you place a gratuity in an envelope and hand it in at the Ship's Office on the last day aboard. We give everybody an equal share and make sure that unseen crew in the kitchens or engine rooms all benefit as well. We recommend $30 per guest as appropriate. Some of our guests like to tip their own room boy or other particularly helpful members of staff individually in addition to the general share, this is fine. From this fund we also make donations to the rare and little known monasteries that we visit and who do not charge entrance fees but badly need funds to help with restoration.

Paying Your Bill
All bills on board ship will be in FEC/US$. Please be sure to have cash with you as we do not accept credit cards or travellers cheques. Bills may be settled at the end of the expedition prior to disembarkation.

Disembarkation from the Vessel
Exact details will be posted on the Daily Schedule and if there is to be an early departure then we will advise you to settle bills, etc., the evening before we disembark. You will

be given tags to ensure that your bag is taken directly to your room at the hotel in Rangoon.

Leaving Burma

Once back in Rangoon our Manager will hand you a departure schedule advising times and procedures for leaving the country. At the same time your international tickets will be returned. You will need FEC / US$6 for airport tax.