



Chapter 12

Ta Mok Shwe-gu-gyi Temple: Local Art in Upper Myanmar 11th–17th Centuries AD

Elizabeth Moore, Win Maung (Tampawaddy) and Htwe Htwe Win

Abstract

The article explores the relationship of a local tradition of nine *Shwe-gu* or “golden caves” and the 11 *khayaing* of Kyaukse, the rice fields that supplied Bagan. Drawing on survey and ongoing work at the Ta Mok *khayaing Shwe-gu-gyi*, we profile a local specificity essential to and yet far from the courts of 11th–17th century Bagan, Pinya and Inwa. In its multiple encasements of images and architecture, the Ta Mok *Shwe-gu-gyi* records a transition from the visual complexity of Bagan period *gu* to the more iconic structures of the Pinya and Inwa eras.

Introduction

Rice in ancient Bagan was more than agriculture. The extent and yields of the Kyaukse rice-fields *khayaing* explain administration and granary production but without the *Shwe-gu* oral tradition (*pa-sat-yazawin*), we argue that the story is incomplete [Fig. 12.1]. The *khayaing* granaries were founded by Anawrahta (AD 1044–1077) to supply Bagan but remained essential for the 14th–15th century AD court at Pinya, 16th–17th century AD Inwa and 18th–19th century AD Mandalay.¹ This longevity is obvious in the temple architecture but rarely mentioned in the economic and administrative documentation of the rice-fields of the 11 *khayaing* [Win Maung (Tampawaddy) 2000; Berliet 2008a]. The stupas and temples, however, marked out artistic, social and religious routes, and annual festival and pilgrimage circuits for local farmers [Burma Gazetteer 1925: 14; Cooley 1969 (1894): 42; Hendrickson 2007]. This tradition continues today with for example, the annual festival in Nadaw (December–January) at the Ta Mok *Shwe-gu-gyi*. The *Glass Palace Chronicle* hints at the religious and social side of the *khayaing*, saying that when the dams, channels, reservoirs and canals were finished, the “spirits of trees and of earth” were called to witness (Pe Maung Tin and Luce 1960: 97). Gordon Luce, perhaps with the *Shwe-gu* in mind, speculated that the *khayaing* stemmed from an earlier clan-system of hereditary lordships absorbed by Bagan (1959: 51). We continue the spatial context of these two sources but focus on the archaeology and architecture of the temples, material evidence that supports the “legends” of local lore and chronicles.

Kyaukse Traditions and Rice

The *khayaing* guarded Bagan’s prosperity and trade eastward, a union of economic and territorial aims seen in other land-based empires of this era (Hendrickson 2011). Given the inland location of the capital from the 13th to late 19th century with rice a dietary staple and common barter good, it had much greater significance than just its economic value, with export during this period virtually non-existent (Siok-Hwa 1968: 2; Berliet 2008b: 195).² Further, rice was stored at the capital in great quantities to protect against rebellion and siege from areas such as Kyaukse (Harvey 1925: 146). Many definitions of the *khayaing* by-pass this spatial hierarchy and neutrally label them a district or administrative unit or put Kyaukse on the outer limits of the urban and administrative nucleus (Aung-Thwin 1985: 100; Myanmar Language

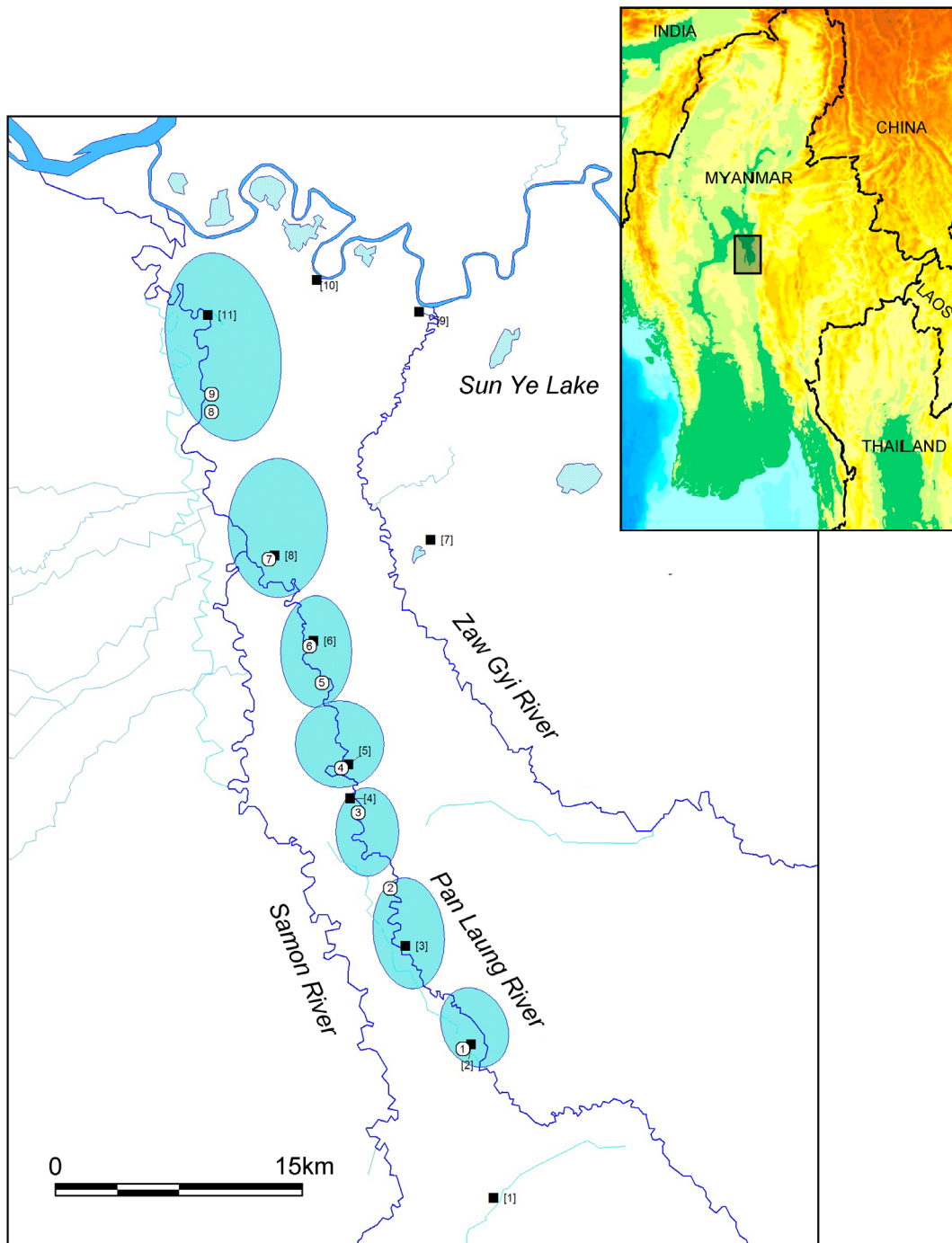


Fig. 12.1: Pan Laung River, Mandalay division, Myanmar: Rice field forts *Khayaing*: [1] Pin le, [2] Pyi mana, [3] Myit tha, [4] Ywa mon, [5] Myin gon daing, [6] Pa nan, [7] Thin daung, [8] Ta Mok, [9] Met kaya, [10] Ta bet kar, [11] Kan lu; Golden Caves *Shwe-gu*: <1> Shwe ku me, <2> Kyun hla, <3> Shwe inn, <4> Kyet Ma, <5> Ma gyi daw, <6> Pa nan, <7> Ta mok, <8> Saw ye, <9> Wun pate; blue circles — approximate extent of *Khayaing* rice fields [Drawing: Win Maung (Tampawaddy) and E. Moore].

Commission 1993: 54). Luce, closer to the local emphasis of this article, called the *khayaing* central points upon which other parts depend (1959: 41).

As noted above, the *khayaing* are generally dated to the reign of Anawrathta, with the 19th century *Kokhayaing Thamaing* recounting legends, administration and the many temples, statues, monasteries and ordination halls installed by the king (Brac de la Perrière 1989: 47, 338–41). They were expanded by Alaungsithu (r. AD 1113–1167) and codified into a complex administration system for the dams and

canals by Narapatisithu within three years of surmounting the throne (Yin Myo Thu 2011: 6).³ Widespread change in the organization of the country at this time also included the founding of 43 fortresses along the eastern border of the empire (Berliet 2008a: 203; 2011). Kyaukse management brought the construction of forts for collection of rice, seeking control of the fertile plain (21°17'–21°47'N, 96°01'–96°10'E). The meandering course of the Kyaukse canals made effective use of the gentle southeast to north slope of the plain and provided essential augmentation of the scarce local rainfall (784mm per annum) (Burma Gazetteer 1925: 5, 13). The rice-fields of the *khayaing* also appear to have subsumed the *Shwe-gu* tradition for all the Pan Laung *khayaing* (Kan lu, Ta Mok, Pa nan, Myin gon daing, Ya Mon, Myit tha, Pyi-mana) enclose one to two *Shwe-gu* (Wun pate and Saw ye *Shwe-gu* at Kan lu, Ta Mok *Shwe-gu* at Ta Mok, Pa nan and Ma gyi daw *Shwe-gu* at Pa nan, Kyet ma *Shwe-gu* at Myin gon daing, Shwe inn *Shwe-gu* at Ywa mon, Kyun hla *Shwe-gu* at Myit tha, and Shwe ku me *Shwe-gu* at Pyi ma na). There is no *Shwe-gu* in the Pin le *khayaing*, perhaps this is because it lies mid-way between the Samon and Pan Laung rivers.

The *khayaing* all contain walled “forts”, although opinions differ on the systematic presence of a fortification as walls are not mentioned in the literature. Ernelle Berliet suggests that two *khayaing*, Met kaya and Myit tha, may also have served as military outposts, and documenting fortified area only at Met kaya, Myin gon daing, Pyi ma na and Pinle, proposes a hierarchy between walled and non-walled *khayaing* (2008b: 196). In contrast, one of the authors, Win Maung (Tampawaddy), estimates areas for all the forts seen in the chart below.⁴ As many of the walls are fragmentary or ruined, the question remains open to debate, but both Ernelle Berliet and Win Maung agree that the primary function of the *khayaing* was crop production and collection [Table 12.1].

Table 12.1: Panlong *Shwe-gu* and *Khayaing* fort size

<i>Khayaing</i>	Present village	Township	<i>Shwegu</i>	Fort (est. ha)
Pin le	Myo twin	Myit tha	none	31
Pyi mana	Near Kume	Myit tha	Shwe ku me	11
Myit tha	Myit tha	Myit tha	Kyun hla	11
Ywa mon	Near Saba daw	Kyaukse	Shwe inn	34
Myin gon daing	Myin kye daing	Kyaukse	Kyet ma	59
Pa nan	Near Pan kwa	Kyaukse	Panan; Ma gyi daw	4
Ta Mok	Near Nyaung bin zaug	Kyaukse	Ta Mok	10
Thin daung	East of Thin daung	Kyaukse	Zaw gyi River	4
Met kaya	Ay bya	Hsint kaing	Zaw gyi and Myit ngeh rivers	17
Ta bet kar ¹	Hsint kaing	Hsint kaing	Myit ngeh River	8
Kan lu	Kan myuu	Hsint kaing	Wun pate; Saw ye	4.2

Note: ¹ Win Maung (Tampawaddy) locates this site along the Myit ngeh in contrast with Berliet's location on the Zaw Gyi River (2008: 197).

The ancient villages of the *khayaing* are not yet fully mapped but surveys over a number of years have documented pottery including wide bowls, globular jars with everted rims and cylindrical vessels with knobbed lids [Win Maung (Tampawaddy) 2000, 2010]. A globular cord-marked jar examined by the authors in December 2010 at Pa nan measured 60cm with spouted burnished libation jars (13cm) at Pa nan and other *khayaing* including Ta Mok like ones in the archaeological museum at Bagan and paintings in the Nandamannya temple, Bagan (Myint Aung 1986: 5, figs.)

Panlong *Khayaing* and *Shwe-gu*

While our focus is on the Ta Mok *khayaing* (21°38'N, 96°03'E) and newly uncovered *Shwe-gu* temple there, this is preceded by a summary of three other *khayaing*: Myin gon daing (21°30'N, 96°05'E), Pa nan (21°35'N, 96°04'E) and Kan Myuu (Kan lu) (21°45'N, 96°01'E). These illustrate the variable conditions of the remains, and the location of all the *Shwe-gu* except the Ta Mok temple, outside the *khayaing* fort walls. The profiles also highlight the exceptional succession of architecture being documented at the Ta Mok *Shwe-gu*.

Myin gon daing

Myin gon daing lies at the centre of the 11 *khayaing* with its pagoda sometimes called the “golden navel” of the rice fields. It is the largest of the *khayaing* walled sites and may have been a terminal node in the Pan Laung inter-change (Hendrickson 2007: 17; Berliet 2008b: 199). On the east bank of the Pan Laung with a clear *in situ* wall, it is the most distinct of the four sites described here. The interior of the *khayaing* fort wall is now filled with rice fields but has remains of three stupas and mounds scattered throughout the site (Berliet 2008b: 199). Surface finds include a Bagan period red plug earring (3.5cm long and tall, 3.3cm wide) and terracotta roof tiles. The site was mentioned in a number of chronicles and inscriptions of the Pinya to Myinzaing periods, with its first occurrence in inscriptions being AD 1198 (Berliet 2008b: 196). All that can be seen of the *Shwe-gu* of Myin gon daing, Kyet-ma *Shwe-gu*, is an eroded brick hill with a small stupa located to the southeast of the *khayaing* wall. As with most of the sites, there are a number of other stupas and monasteries scattered around the wall from various eras. The Thet-taw-ya stupa for example, has Inwa period floral details in stucco remaining on the terraces of the stupa and the upper bell.

Pa nan⁵

Only segments of the wall remain on the south side of the Pa nan *khayaing* fort. Numerous fragments of earthenware cups, pots and large bricks (46 x 25 x 3cm) found on the east of the old city in new Pa Nan document earlier habitation. In 2004–5, a villager excavation of a square brick temple was overseen by the Department of Archaeology (Berliet 2008b: 198). Pa nan is mentioned in an inscription from AD 1198 with continued patronage about one hundred years ago in the southern monastery collection of images and an early Konbaung stupa as well as the Pa nan *Shwe-gu-gyi*, again outside the ancient fort wall. The temple has been renovated in recent years but shows evidence of its Bagan-era construction in its rounded arches. South of the Pa nan *khayaing* fort wall on the opposite bank of the Pan Laung is another temple, the Ma gyi daw *Shwe-gu*. Erosion has recently exposed the façade of a large Bagan period temple with finely detailed carving and floral details.

Kan lu

Little remains of the Kan lu *khayaing* fort wall, but a number of bricks (38 x 20 x 5cm) have been found at the site. There are four villages of Kan lu today with one on the west bank and three on the east bank of the Pan Laung. It is mentioned, often as Kan Myuu, in seven inscriptions between 1211–1314 and later as Kha-myuu, thought to derive from the numerous “ga” birds (partridge, /kha/) in the area. Just north of Kan lu gyi, “big Kan lu”, the most northerly of the three villages on the west bank is the Shwe-bon-tha pagoda. Recent renovation of the ordination hall yielded an oval shaped votive table (6.4cm ht., 5cm width) with the single image of the Buddha in the *bhūmisparśa mudra* flanked by two bell-shaped stupas typical of the Late Pyu (8th–10th century AD) period [Fig. 12.2]. The Wun pate *Shwe-gu* was restored in 2008 although the profile of the roof incline on the temple testifies to its Bagan period construction. To the north are the *Shwe-gu-ni* or red temple, and the *Shwe-gu-byauk* or fully decorated temple. The nearby Saw ye *Shwe-gu-gyi* or Hpaya Nga-hsu-kyā -tin-gu (Five lotus pagodas) has an *in situ* 20-line inscription including the phrase “*Shwe-gu-dayaka*” or temple donor in reference to

Alaungsithu's patronage. The temple, an additional small stupa, and other structures are surrounded by piles of old bricks adjacent to an isolated monastery with one resident monk.

As these brief details indicate, with the exception of Myin gon daing, the architecture of the *Shwe-gu* temples provides stronger evidence of antiquity and successive patronage than the *khayaing* walls. The current work at the Ta Mok *Shwe-gu-gyi*, however, is the only temple of the Pan Laung located inside the *khayaing* fort wall and the only example where the Bagan period architecture has been fully uncovered.⁶

Ta Mok *Shwe-gu-gyi*

The Ta Mok *Shwe-gu-gyi* temple lies within a monastery 1.34km east of the juncture of the Pan Laung and Samon Rivers in the midst of fields (80m msl) 10km northwest of Kyaukse. Two additional monasteries are located north and south of the old *khayaing* wall. To the north, on a road linking the village of Kyaung pan kon and Nyaung bin zauk, is the Ta Mok Taw Ya *Kyaung*. Outside the southern *khayaing* fort wall is the small *Shwe-mutaw* stupa, with additional stupas exposed adjacent to this by construction for a gas pipeline. Close by, near the village of Ngeh-to is the Ngwe Twin Tu: Taw Ya, "silver well forest-monastery" with a damaged stone slab donated by the three "Shan" brothers while they were *myosa* or governors that mentions completion of donations to the ancient garden of Ta Mok in AD 1319.

The two-story Bagan Ta Mok temple was encased with a stupa begun in the reign of Pinya King Ussana and completed in the AD 1355–1362 reign of Hsin-phyuu-thakin Kyaw-swa-min-gyi. Ussana donated five fields, two male and two female temple slaves, and together with his Chief Queen made a royal pilgrimage from Inwa to Ta Mok *Shwe-gu-gyi* in a *Pyi-gyi-kyet-thwa* barge mentioned in the AD 1356 inscription stone erected to commemorate the visit. While the shape of the barge is not noted, royal craft were often constructed in the shape of auspicious animals such as the mythical *karaweik* bird or a double bodied naga and standing *galon* (garuda) (Htun Yi 1984). By AD 1915 the condition of the stupa had deteriorated, although U San Htwa donated a 6m high stupa [Fig. 12.3]. In 1993, Ashin Sandawbatha, native to Ngeh-to village, came to settle at Ta Mok, and while meditating inside an opening on the north side of the ruined 14th century *Shwe-gu-gyi* stupa, noticed layers of brick in the small cell. Word reached Win Maung (Tampawaddy), who visited the site in 1993 and has been working on the temple up to the present in collaboration with Ashin Sandawbatha. In 2008, the Department of Archaeology gave permission to dismantle the 14th century stupa, and by 2010 a two-story north-facing temple covered in stucco had been unearthed [Fig. 12.4]. This and other structures at Ta Mok are dated here on stylistic grounds including the brickwork, arches, images of the Buddha and thrones and decoration as set out in the table below [Table 12.2] and shown in the sketches of the temple complex plan [Figs. 12.5 and 12.6].



Fig. 12.2: Kan lu votive tablet with single image in *bhūmisparśa mudrā* circa 8th–10th centuries, 6.4cm ht., 5cm width (Photo: Sithu, Ta Mok Project).



Fig. 12.3: Ta Mok in 1992 [Photo: U Win Maung (Tampawaddy)].



Fig. 12.4: East façade Ta Mok in 2010 (Photo: Sithu, Ta Mok Project).



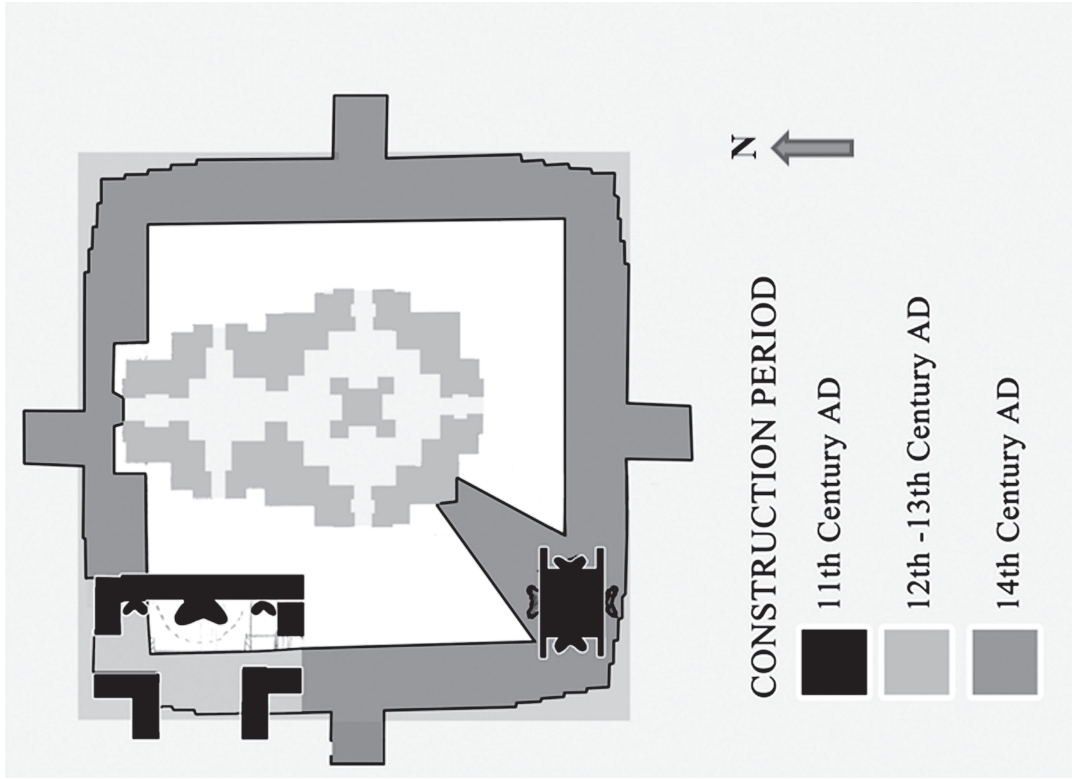


Fig. 12.6: Plan of central structures (Drawing: Cho Zaw Min).

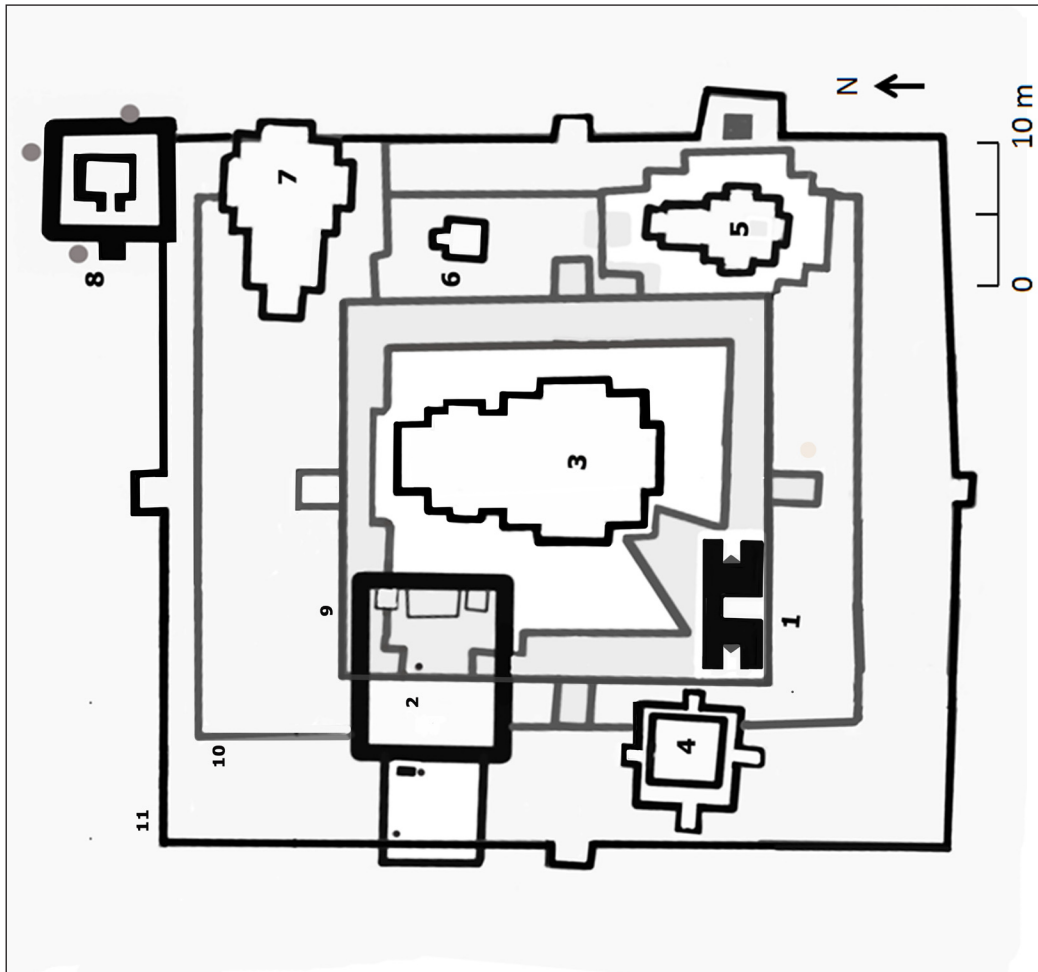


Fig. 12.5: Ta Mok temple complex: (1) Two small *gu* on southwest; (2) *thein* (ordination hall) with *sima* (•); and inscription (—); (3) Two-story temple; (4) *Ta-wa-gu* temple; (5) *Zayat* foundation; (6) Stucco-mixing tank; (7) *Naung-taw-gyi* stupa; (8) Square structure with urns; (9) 14th century AD stupa wall; (10) 11th–12th century AD wall; (11) 14th century AD wall [Drawing: Win Maung (Tampawaddy) and E. Moore].

Table 12.2: Buildings unearthed in the Ta Mok temple complex

No.	Building	Stylistic date begun	Length (m)	Width (m)	Notes
1	Two small <i>gu</i> Southwest	late 11th century	8.95	3.2	total length
2	<i>Thein</i>	late 11th century	21.75	9.3	total length multiple additions
3	Two-story temple central	12th–13th century	18	12	width widest point; door jamb east side 1.70m below ground level
4	Zayat foundation Southwest	uncertain	7.4	7.4	Inner structure offset 1.26 (W); 1.18 (S); 1.0 (N); 0.54 (E)
5	Ta-wa-gu temple Southeast	12th–13th century	10	7	width widest point
6	Stucco mixing tank East	14th century	2.9	3.6	in complex of additional walls
7	Naung-taw-gyi temple Northeast	10th–12th century	14.7	10	4.9 on east smaller end; 1.95m below ground level
8	Square structure with urns Northeast	8th–10th century	10.5	11.2	measured on west and north; 2.26m below ground level

Gu and thein

Among the many buildings that have been unearthed since 2008 are two east-west facing single-chamber *gu* that were encased within the southwest corner of the 14th century stupa. The outermost image of the Buddha (45cm ht.) in the west-facing *gu* has been reworked — the nose and mouth can be attributed to the 12th century but the smooth head without curls or *usnisa* suggests the 13th century. Excavation of the throne has unearthed two earlier thrones although the encased images have not been uncovered. In the space between the back walls of the two *gu*, evidence of timber has been recovered from post-holes. In the east *gu* are three encased images, successive thrones and floor levels [Fig. 12.7]. The inner image is Gupta-influenced, stylistically dated to the 11th century AD with partial excavation and repair leaving the face of this image visible at chest level of a 12th century AD encasing Pala style image (1.5m ht.). The outermost image is datable to the 13th century late Bagan period. All three sit on a common double lotus throne, each higher and slightly forward. This type of lotus throne carved from bricks can be seen on the inner throne of Kyauk Saga (IMP 1029). It



Fig. 12.7: Three encased images in east-facing *gu*, Ta Mok (Photo: Sithu, Ta Mok Project).

was common in the reign of Anawrahta but unusually, it is made with stucco at Shwe-gu-gyi. Terracotta snail-shell shaped hair curls were recovered from the images, each moulded and attached to a slightly hardened layer of stucco on the head.⁷

The *thein* is a rectangular structure facing to the west with three large images the Buddha set against the back wall. The width of the crossed legs has been used to estimate the height of the images, ca. 7.2, 14.8 and 7.2m. The central and flanking throne bases again suggest 11th or early 12th century construction while a third throne layer is probably 13th century renovation.⁸ A black stone *sima* (104cm ht., 35cm wide) was found outside the west wall of the *thein*. Two additional *sima* stones have been unearthed under westward extensions of the *thein*. One is an eroded octagonal *sima* (now 44cm ht.) made of marble dated to the Pinya period and another an hexagonal shaped *sima* (63cm ht.) of grey sand stone with floral design of the late Bagan period (13th century AD). Excavation of the *thein* has revealed three phases: a brick platform with post-holes indicating a wooden superstructure, a brick structure overlying the platform and a third renovation, probably in the 15th century, extending the structure to the west. Red and white painted pot sherds recovered from the floor of the lowest throne recall ones from the lowest layer of the small east-west facing *gu*, similar to those found in the excavations of the palace attributed to Anawrahta at Bagan.

The Two-Story Temple

The north-facing two story-temple was erected just north of the small east-west oriented *gu*. There are six entrances with a north entry hall and central pillar flanked by four images of the Buddha: Birth on the west, Enlightenment on the north, First Sermon on the east and Demise of the Buddha on the south.⁹ The largest in *bhūmisparśa* mudra rests against the north face of the central pillar, with altogether 22 images (2.25–40cm ht.). Eighteen, five in *dhyani* mudra and the others in *bhūmisparśa* mudra are set in niches set inside the entrances and inner corners. On the upper level, images of the Buddha flanking the central pillar follow the same plan. The images probably date to a late 12th century renovation, a change indicated by the earlier rounded style of arch on the lower story versus the later more pointed style of the upper story arches. Much of interior has been periodically renovated although there are traces of painting on the upper and lower story and a painted inscription dated to AD 1322 on the upper part of a door arch on the south side on the lower story.

Some elements of the temple such as the encasement of *gu* with a stupa and the stucco *jatakas* are not found at Bagan while other elements of the architecture and decoration are similar. For example, the flaring *saing-paung* or ox-haunches flanking the central doorway are more tightly angled (circa 15°) rather than the more usual 30° outward cant of the Bagan *saing-paung*. However, the redented corners create a profile similar to that at the Sulamani (AD 1183, IMP 748) (Pichard 1994). The overall plan of the temple resembles several at Bagan including the Gu-ni (north, IMP 766), the Sein-nyet-ama (IMP 1085) and the Gu-taw-thit-hpaya (IMP 1486) (Pichard 1994, 1996). The most notable element of the two-story temple is the detailed stucco work which covers the exterior surface. One example is seen in three-dimensional crowned royal guardian figures, *lokapala* or *Nat-min-gyi*, on the upper story. Similar (repaired) figures are also found at the Dhammayazika (AD 1196, no. 937, IMP 947) although these no longer have heads or the ornamental details seen at Ta Mok (Pichard 1985: pl. 27–28; 1994–6). The shoulders of the Ta Mok figures indicate that the arms were held in the *anjali* or respect and offering posture, possibly an elite *deva* [Fig. 12.8]. Four are seen on each side of the temple with two on the middle terrace and two on the uppermost terrace.

The fine stucco work on the two-story temple is also evident in the pediments and tympanums over the doors of Ta Mok *Shwe-gu-gyi*. The south tympanum depicts a *galon* standing on the head of a crowned *naga-min* with two additional naga draped around him. Below is a seated figure of the fertility goddess *Sri*, hands grasping floral strands curling up from two *nget-hsin* or elephant-birds below. A similar image is seen on the east tympanum, raised on a lotus pedestal above the doorway arch with a large *kirtimukha*. The north pediment, recently recovered, is also different. It appears to have been removed when the outer wall of Ussana's 14th century stupa cut through the north face of the earlier temple. During 2011, the fallen pediment was found face-down and carefully covered with hardened mud in front of the *Naung-*

taw-gyi temple northeast of the two-story temple. The pediment has now been cleaned and is placed near the two-story temple's north entry [Fig. 12.9]. The central part depicts a seated lion with his mouth open, tongue extended, and an erect sexual organ. He sits on the heads of three elephants, with a seated crowned figure above, possibly a *kinnari*, *deva* or *galon*. Devas, lions and floral elements fill the flame elements that flank the centre. This energized iconography is also seen in standing ogres or *bilu* at corner junctions of the temple with one hand erect grasping a stout club, some with erect sexual organs and large protruding tongues.

On the upper level are stucco reliefs (ca. 10 x 15cm) of the first 108 of the 550 *jatakas*, the previous lives of the Buddha. Eight *jatakas* (nos. 54–61) were not included, and 24 are eroded, but 76 scenes remain *in situ*. Win Maung (Tampawaddy) suggests that additional reliefs may once have existed at the base of the temple recalling the architecture of the Ananda pagoda at Bagan but that these were destroyed in the encasement of the two-story temple. Identifying inscriptions in Myanmar are seen below the scenes although the names of the Bodhisattvas are in Pali. Stucco *jataka* scenes and writing in stucco have not been documented at Bagan. In addition, some scenes such as the Kandina (Kannina) Jataka (no. 13) have not been recorded at Bagan. The story is a lesson on the perils of love, simply depicted at Ta Mok with three figures: the Bodhisattva is shown as a tree spirit observing a mountain-stag who left the safety of the forest to accompany a doe, with whom he had fallen in love, back to her village. In the story, the doe sensed the hunters lying in wait and let the stag go first and he was killed with a single arrow. In the scene the hunter is shown with his arrow killing the fallen stag before cooking the flesh and carrying the carcass on a pole back to his children (Cowell 1895) [Fig. 12.10]. The *jataka* scenes appear to have been carefully protected or enshrined when the 14th century AD Pinya period stupa was built. For example, during its removal in 2008, the inner two-story temple was found



Fig. 12.8: Royal guardian figures on upper level Ta Mok *Shwe-gu-gyi* (Photo: Sithu, Ta Mok Project).



Fig. 12.9: Detail north pediment Ta Mok *Shwe-gu-gyi* (Photo: Sithu, Ta Mok Project).



Fig. 12.10: Stucco *Kandina* (Kannina) Jataka (no. 13) Jataka, Ta Mok (Photo: Sithu, Ta Mok Project).



Fig. 12.11: Detail *marabein* pattern of roundels in stucco, east wall (Photo: Sithu, Ta Mok Project).

to have been coated with approximately 2.5cm of hardened mud. Seventy votive tablets described below were also found embedded in the mud coating. The eroded scenes may well have been damaged therefore by the time of the stupa's construction.

In addition to the pediments and tympanums noted above, stucco covers the surface on all the lower exterior walls of the temple. The longer east and west sides of the temple are covered with a *marabein* or screen design such as seen in mural paintings at Bagan. The *marabein* have multiple roundels arranged in rows, with figures of *deva*, animals and mythical creatures and floral patterns (*kanote-pan*). One panel

of 15 roundels on the east side depicts a seated *deva* at the centre, with lions above and below, deer to the right and left, and the other ten roundels with various birds [Fig. 12.11]. Twelve types of mythical birds, many in pairs, some erect with others shown prone, have been identified on the temple walls. They include the mythical *lun-kyin* intensely devoted to its mate and seen on royal barges, and the *nget-hsin* or elephant bird, a roc-like creature with a proboscis also known as the *hti-hlaing-ka* from the Pali *hati-lain-ga* or *hatilinka*. There are also elephants, horses, *hintha* (*hamsa*, Brahminy duck), peacocks, egrets, owls, doves, hens, monkeys, human and *nat* figures, flower blossoms and buds. On the upper and lower story, upturned *sein-htaung* depict intertwined birds and lotus buds, two deer and a wheel of law (*dhamma-cakra*), *chinthe* and human and *nat* figures. There is a *galon* on top of a triple naga on a side-arch recalling stucco work at Kusinara (IMP 1266) and a pentagonal stupa (IMP 1410) east of Mingalazeidi at Bagan. Various figures fill diamond-shaped triangles (*Sein-htaung-kyun*), roundels on the main walls and sides of the doorway (*thekkadan-pan*) and the *moat-pan* or main arch. While there are some stucco roundels Bagan, for example on *sikhara* of the Bochyomi Gubyauk (IMP 995), most parallels at Bagan and in the Pinya period such as at Shwe-gu-Oo-min caves (21°35'N, 96°12'E) east of Kyaukse are paintings on the interior of temples.

On the upper corners of the temple double-bodied mythical lions (*chinthe*) can be seen with one body stretched along each side of the corner. The creatures' heads are in place, tufted mane and decorative swirls on the rounded hindquarters; the faces animated and ears erect. Similar *chinthe* are seen on the corners of a temple near Mingala-zeidi (IMP 1410) although there, the head is missing. On the corners below the *chinthe*, are large *bilu* or ogre heads similar to ones at Sulamani temple (IMP 748) at Bagan. Also on the upper corner elements are 16 alms bowls (*thabeik-myauk*) with a cup-shaped bell (*khaung-laung*). These lack the usual "belt" around the middle of the bell but have a row of small pearls and a bottom edge of upturned lotus petals. Above the layers of the rings (*phaung-yit*) are rounded horizontal bands and upper tiers or *Hsat-ta-wa-li* (*chattravali*). Each is surmounted by a lotus bud finial and set on a square pedestal decorated with eight upturned rounded diamond shapes (*sein-htaung-waing*), floral details and *bilu*. As these notes highlight, the stucco work is detailed, filling the surface with a wide array of zoomorphic, anthropomorphic and floral motifs.

Iconography and Orientation

There are multiple ways in which one can engage with the newly uncovered two-story temple. The interior provides quiet meditational and ritual spaces, its figures evoking a devotional quiet suspended from the animation of the exterior. When walking clockwise around the temple, the gaze is continuously drawn along the spaces prompting completion of a pilgrim circuit or *pradakshina*. Iconic profiles of the alms bowls, the *Nat-min-gyi* and the motifs filling the balanced rectangles and curves of the temple offer different planes of visual interaction (Pinney 2010: 191).

Any overall significance in the iconographic scheme and orientation of the two-story temple remains open to discussion. The north orientation of the two-story temple is popularly related to *Htwet-yat-lan* or *Htwet-pauk* method and practice. The term is commonly linked to veneration of Maitreya, the future Buddha, also *weikza* and "going out" from rebirth through supernatural means including lead and iron alchemy, graphic diagrams (*in*) and medicinal practices (Myanmar Language Commission 1993: 207; Than Swe 2004: 20–1; Rozenberg 2010: 51, 162, fn. 7). The multiple depictions of mythical and actual animals on the exterior of the stucco-covered temple are unusual, suggesting local and perhaps forest-dwelling preferences. The variation also recalls accounts that said the Ari moved east from Bagan to the "Shan" areas around Kyaukse where Mahayana practices were well established [Burma Gazetteer Kyaukse 1925: 10–1; Phayre 1998 (1883): 22, 33]. Questions about the Ari are only part of the story, however, for Mayayana, esoteric, Brahmanic and animist practices commonly intersected at Bagan (Bode 1965: 16–8; Than Tun 1988: 43). Earlier sects, dating to the 4th century AD, included not only multiple Theravada traditions, but Mahayana, Buddhist tantra and Brahmanism (Pranke 2004: 18, fn. 57). While conjectural given the ongoing work at the site, it is this sense of multiple traditions often separated by terms such as Theravada, Mahayana and esoteric that may be reflected in the orientation and iconography of the two-story temple at Ta Mok.

Other Structures at Ta Mok

In addition to the small *gu*, two-story temple, stupa and *thein*, a number of other structures have been unearthed in the Ta Mok *Shwe-gu-gyi* compound. South of the *thein* on the west side described above, excavation in 2010–11 has unearthed the square brick foundations of a wooden *zayat*. The undated structure has two enclosures, an inner, probably earlier, one and a second outer enclosure with four staircases, one on each side.

Four structures have been excavated on the east of the two-story temple, named by Win Maung (Tampawaddy) in conjunction with the Ta Mok Sayadaw. To the southeast of the main temple is a single-entrance or *Ta-wa-gu* (“one entry”) stupa with two foundation or floor levels. A finely carved *andagu* (15cm) has been recovered within a layered cavity on the south side of this structure [Fig. 12.12].

- The *andagu* shows the *Parinivāna* on the top and the Enlightenment at the centre flanked in clockwise order from the bottom left by the Nativity, the Great Miracle, the Descent from *Tāvātīm-Hsa*, the Taming of *Nālāgiri* Elephant, the First Sermon and the *Pārīleyyaka* Retreat.
- At the base of the arched surround or *takeh*, a standing Bodhisattva flanks both sides with small figures of the army of Mara filling the upper portion of the *takeh*.
- The image of the Buddha is held aloft by two naga in human form (*Naga-luu-lin*).
- Under this at the bottom of *andagu* are a mythical lion and elephant head and the seven gems of a *Chakravatin* (e.g., the Wheel, the Elephant, the Horse, the Gem, the Woman, the Housefather and the Advisor).



Fig. 12.12: Andagu from Ta Mok *Shwe-gu-gyi* (Photo: E. Moore).

North of the *Ta-wa-gu* stupa is a north-south rectangular structure with a single opening on the north provisionally identified as a stucco-mixing tank. Again to the north is the four-entry stupa *Naung-taw-gyi* stupa with images of the Buddha facing to the four directions. The structure is oriented to the west with four layers attributed to the colonial period, Narapatisithu, Anawrahta and a pre-Bagan phase with multiple ash and bone foundation deposits at the same depth at the foundation of the “Pyu” square structure to the north described below. Other deposits of bone and tuff-like slag have been found to the south of *Naung-taw-gyi* stupa.

North of the *Naung-taw-gyi* stupa is a square structure with two enclosures. There is a staircase on the west and a west entry to the inner structure. Around the exterior wall, three urns have been found on the southeast, northeast and northwest. From the style of the urns and the condition of the bones, Win Maung (Tampawaddy) provisionally dates them to the Late Pyu period circa 9th–10th century AD. He suggests that the building was rebuilt in the later Bagan period on a foundation similar to 2nd–9th century AD Pyu sites such as Beikthano’s KKG-4 where a number of urns have been recovered. A large quantity of pottery typical of the Pyu period has been recovered around the square structure. Along the

same north line of the temple complex a cache of thin (2mm) hard glossy burnished black ware was found, tentatively identified as a begging bowl. The sherds are similar to pieces found at the Bronze Age cemetery of Nyaungan and HL26 at Halin [Aung Mon, Win Maung (Tampawaddy), pers. comm., August 2011].

Votive Tablets

Four types of tablets have been found under the central image of the *thein* on the west and the temple surrounds. These are described in detail since they have slight departures from the usual iconography and to allow comparison with other tablets.

- Four tablets (14–15cm in ht., 10cm width and 2cm thick) provisionally dated to the 11th–13th century AD shows a seated single image of the Buddha in the centre in *bhūmisparśa mudrā* surrounded by depictions of the eight scenes of the life of the Buddha. The central image is surmounted by a *takeh* or surround, with tall flame-like projections shown in front of a four-tiered *pyat-that* and behind that, the upper fronds of a *bodhi* tree [Fig. 12.13]. The use of the flames on the *takeh* is a unique decorative device not seen at Bagan but the images of the Buddha resemble a tablet in the Bagan museum dated to the 13th century AD (Htwe Htwe Win 2007).
- The *Parinivāna* scene is at the top of the tablet, with the large Enlightenment at the centre. The other scenes, moving from the lower right in a counter-clockwise direction, are the Nativity, the *Pārileyyaka* Retreat, the First Sermon, the Descent from *Tāvātimsa*, the Taming of the *Nālāgiri* Elephant and the Great Miracle.
- The *Parinivāna* scene shows the reclining Buddha framed in a decorated bed flanked by two small relic caskets (*kalaśa* pot) or stūpas and small lotus flowers with four small stūpas at the apex of the tablet.
- The Nativity shows Māyā in semi *tribhanga* pose, grasping a tree branch with her left arm around Pajāpatī's shoulder while the Buddha sits on the lotus coming from her right side. On one of the tablets, the lower garments of Māyā and her sister bear large roundels.
- The *Pārileyyaka* Retreat scene shows the Buddha sideways but with His face turned to the front. The elephant is shown behind him while the monkey is standing and offering honey rice to the Buddha.
- The Enlightenment scene depicts the seated Buddha with the *Vajrāsana* (Diamond throne) on top of the *Padmāsana* (Lotus throne).
- The Great Miracle illustrates a seated Buddha in *dhamacakra mudrā* on a lotus throne with small seated Buddhas or stupas on each side.
- The Descent from *Tāvātimsa* depicts the standing Buddha in *varada mudrā* with *Sāriputta* on his right but not the usual depiction of *Brahmā* on the other side.
- The Taming of the *Nālāgiri* Elephant scene has the standing Buddha in *Abhaya mudrā* with a standing disciple behind him and the crouched elephant in front of him.



Fig. 12.13: Inscribed votive tablet, Ta Mok Shwe-gu-gyi (Photo: E. Moore).

Two lines of Pali are written at the bottom of this tablet, a type not found in Mya's 1961 votive tablet compendium. The writing is the blessing (*Hsu-taung-sar*) roughly translated as "By the making of this [votive tablet] may it help [me] to get the wisdom of knowing all things". A similar tablet found by Bo Kay had the same verse but in Mon rather than the Pali language. The language variation plus the flame-like projections suggest later production, but the dating of the tablet remains open to discussion for it can also be interpreted as local conservatism far from the centre.

There are additional tablets with a single image of the Buddha dated to the 11th century.

- Two tablets show the Buddha in a standing posture on a lotus under a trefoil arch. The left hand is pendant in *varada mudrā* and the right raised at breast level in *mahākārunika mudrā*. On each side of the tablet is a pair of bell shape stupas with the smaller one above a larger somewhat elongated one. The space below is filled with two small bell shape stupas, making up a total of eight stupas surrounding the central image of the Buddha.
- Two other tablets depict the Buddha in *bhūmisparśa mudrā* seated cross legged with the left leg above the right (*Paryankasana*) on a double lotus throne under a trefoil arch topped by an umbrella. The branches of a Bodhi tree are on each side of an umbrella with traces of a two line Pali inscription below the throne. Parallel examples from Bagan bear an inscription on the reverse noting they were donated by a higher village official or *Ka-lan-than-byin-min* [Mya (Thiripyanchi) 1961, vol. 1: figs. 78–80].
- A third group of single-image tablets is made up of 70 small (5cm ht., 3cm width) tablets, all probably stamped from the same mould and dated to the Pinya period. As noted above, they were found on the upper part of the stupa embedded in the clay coating put on the two-story temple when the 14th century stupa was constructed. The tablets show the Buddha seated in *bhūmisparśa mudrā* on a double lotus throne under a trefoil arch topped by an umbrella. The branches of a Bodhi tree can be seen on each side of the umbrella although they are more stylized than the 11th-century tablets. There are in addition five bell shaped stūpas on either side of tablet.

In summary, tablets provisionally dated to the 11th–14th century AD have been documented at the Ta Mok *Shwe-gu-gyi* from excavation of temples and an ordination hall. While for the most part paralleled by examples from Bagan and Pinya, iconographic details of an inscribed tablet and the embedding of the 14th century tablets on the upper part of the two-story *Shwe-gu-gyi* temple suggest local custom and preferences.

Conclusion

The nine *Shwe-gu* temples along the Pan Laung mark out local paths of religious and social pilgrimage, with evidence from the Ta Mok *Shwe-gu-gyi* temple indicating ritual use by at least ca. the 9th–10th century AD. From the 11th century AD, the Bagan economy spawned a new and more global modernity in the institutionalization of the seven Pan Laung *khayaing*. Ongoing work at the two-story *Shwe-gu-gyi*, the only instance where the *Shwe-gu* is inside the fort wall, brings the *khayaing* and *Shwe-gu* traditions together. Motifs of fertility and celebration on the lower story of the temple are complemented by *jatakas* on the upper story and images of the Buddha on the four sides of both upper and lower stories. Other structures in the temple compound are provisionally dated to the 11th–13th century, with donations also made in the early 20th century.

While the 11 *khayaing* may have been by-products of the court's zeal for agricultural and trade buffers, the architecture of the Pan Laung *Shwe-gu* indicates that they also heightened pre-existing local patronage traditions. This local context is often constricted in a centre-periphery framework, a one-way discourse that easily reduces the art of the periphery to a passive product of the centre. We have highlighted the uniqueness of the Ta Mok *Shwe-gu-gyi* in an effort to re-dress the implication of simplicity in such imitation with the complexity of the Pan Laung architecture and economy. In a rapidly changing region such as Kyaukse, the *Shwe-gu* and *khayaing* traditions offer a means of sustaining the intangible place of the past for the communities of today. In this context, they offer an innovative framework for defining the local archaeology of villages throughout Upper Myanmar.

Notes

1. Dates after Than Swe (1994: 19).
2. Rice production in Lower Burma increased substantially only after the widening of international trade with colonial rule of the delta. From an average acreage of 66,000 acres in 1830, for example, in 1930, 9720 acres of paddy were grown in Lower Burma. While production also widened in Upper Burma, the acreage never equalled that of the delta. Figures rise, for example, from 1196 acres in 1890 when British reports become available, to 2367 acres in 1930 (Siok-Hwa 1968: 25).
3. Narapatisithu was also said to have constructed the stone weir that the Ta mok canal joined (Burma Gazetteer 1925: 15).
4. Berliet (2008b: 196) documents fortified areas only at Met kaya, Myin gon daing, Pyi ma na and Pinle.
5. No local derivation or meaning for the name “Pa nan” has yet been found [Win Maung (Tampawaddy) 2000].
6. In addition to the Ma gyi daw *Shwe-gu* mentioned in the text, evidence of Bagan period architecture is seen at Thindaung on the Zaw Gyi River (Berliet 2008b: 197).
7. At the Shwe-zi-gon pagoda at Tagaung dated to Anawrahta’s period, numerous images of the Buddha with similar snail-shell shaped hair curls were found.
8. A similar *thein* is found in the Sule group at Bagan and at the Kya hsin temple south of Myinkaba a row of three images dated to Anawrahta’s period has been recorded.
9. The more common form is to depict the Birth on the north, Enlightenment on the east, First Sermon on the south and reclining Buddha on the west.

References

- Aung-Thwin, M. *Pagan: the origins of modern Burma*. Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1985.
- _____. The Myth of the ‘Three Shan Brothers’ and the Ava Period in Burmese History. *The Journal of Asian Studies* 55, 4 (1996): 881–901.
- Berliet, E. Territorial planning in Burma during the Pagan period (1044–1287). The foundation of an empire. In *From Homo Erectus to the Living Traditions. Choice of papers from the 11th International Conference of the European Association of Southeast Asian Archaeologists, Bougon, 25th–29th September 2006*, ed. J.P. Pautreau, A.S. Coupey, V. Zeitoun and E. Rabault. Chiang Mai: Siam Ratana, 2008a, pp. 203–5.
- _____. The eleven khayaing of Kyaukse: an example of territorial pattern and resources management in Central Burma (Myanmar) during the Pagan period (1044–1287). In *From Homo Erectus to the Living Traditions. Choice of papers from the 11th International Conference of the European Association of Southeast Asian Archaeologists, Bougon, 25th–29th September 2006*, ed. J.P. Pautreau, A.S. Coupey, V. Zeitoun and E. Rabault. Chiang Mai: Siam Ratana, 2008b, pp. 195–201.
- _____. *Occupation du territoire et processus d’urbanisation en Birmanie, des origines (IIe s. av. J.C.) à la fin du XIIIe siècle*, Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, coll. Indicopleustai no. 7, 2011 [forthcoming].
- Bode, M.H. *The Pali Literature of Burma*. Rangoon: Burma Research Society, 1965.
- Brac de la Perrière, B. L’Histoire des Neuf Karuin. *Journal Asiatique* 277 (1989), part 1–2: 47–87, part 3–4: 299–361.
- Burma Gazetteer. *Kyaukse District*. Rangoon: Superintendent Government Printing and Stationery, 1925.
- Cowell, E.B. *The Jātakas or Stories of the Buddha’s Former Births*, trans. Chalmers, R, vol. 1, 1895. <<http://www.sacred-texts.com>> [last accessed 12 Sept. 2011].
- Cooley, C.H. The theory of transportation. *Sociological Theory and Social Research*. New York: Augustus M. Kelley Publishers, 1969 [1894], pp. 17–118.
- Harvey, G.E. *History of Burma*. London: Longmans, Green & Co, 1925 / 67.
- Hendrickson, M. Arteries of empire: An operational study of transport and communication in Angkorian Southeast Asia (9th to 15th centuries CE). Thesis (PhD). Department of Archaeology, University of Sydney, 2007.
- _____. A transport geographic perspective on travel and communication in Angkorian Southeast Asia (ninth to fifteenth centuries AD). *World Archaeology* 43, 3 (2011): 444–57.
- Htun Yi. *She-haung Sa-pey thu-te-thi-ta-oo su-hsaung-byu su-thi-nan-hmu-nan-ya ah-hsin-tan-sa hnit thi-hmat-phweh-ya-mya ah-si-ah-nin, ah-baing 2 [Ancient records of royal conveyances (vehicles and shoes)]*. Yangon: Daw Kyi Baho-sa-ku (Circulated mimeograph), 1984.
- Htwe Htwe Win. Votive tablets of Myanmar. Thesis (PhD), History Department, Yangon University, 2007.
- Luce, G.H. Geography of Burma under the Pagan Dynasty. *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 42, 1 (1959): 37–51.
- Mya (Thiripyanchi). *Votive Tablets of Burma*, vol. 1. Rangoon: Department of Archaeology, 1961.
- Myanmar Language Commission. *Myanmar-English Dictionary*. Yangon: Department of the Myanmar Language Commission, Ministry of Education, 1993.

- Myint Aung. The libation jar in Asian history. *The Working People's Daily*, 11 June 1986, pp. 5–6.
- Pe Maung Tin and Luce, G.H. *The Glass Palace Chronicle of the Kings of Burma*. Rangoon: Rangoon University Press, 1960.
- Phayre, A. *History of Burma*. Bangkok: Orchid Press, Bibliotheca Orientalis, 1998 [1883].
- Pichard, P. Les Monuments sur plan pentagone à Pagan. *Bulletin de l'École française d'Extrême Orient* 74 (1985): 305–68.
- _____. *Inventory of Monuments at Pagan*, vol. 3 (Monuments 553–818), 4 (Monuments 813–1136), 6 (Monuments 1440–1736). Paris: UNESCO / Gartmore: Kiscadale, 1994 / 1996.
- Pinney, C. 'Buddhist' Photography. In *The Marshall Albums: Photography and Archaeology*, ed. S. Guha. Delhi: Alkazi Collection of Photography in Association with Mapin Publishing, 2010, pp. 178–202.
- Pranke, P. The 'Treatise on the Lineage of Elders' (Vamsadipani): Monastic Reform and the Writing of Buddhist History in Eighteenth-Century Burma. Thesis (PhD), PhD Buddhist Studies, UMI No. 3122027, University of Michigan, 2004.
- Rozenberg, G. *Renunciation and Power; the quest for sainthood in contemporary Burma* (Translated by J. Hackett). New Haven: Yale Southeast Asia Studies, 2010.
- Siok-Hwa, Cheng. *The Rice Industry of Burma 1852–1940*. Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1968.
- Than Swe. *Pu-gan Zei-di pu-htoe-mya* [Bagan period Zeidi]. Yangon: Myawadi Press, 1994.
- _____. *Shin-ko-shin Tha-maing-win Dawei Hpaya-mya Ah-thein* [Nine Pagodas of Dawei]. Yangon: Ah-they Ah-waing Sabe, 2004.
- Than Tun. *Essays on the history and Buddhism of Burma*. Isle of Arran: Kiscadale, 1988.
- Win Maung (Tampawaddy). Myit-tha-11-ywa kwin-hsin-let-la-khyet-hmat-su [Field work notes on the *leh-twin* 11 *khayaing*]. Paper presented at the 84th Birthday Commemoration (Mandalay), 4 Dec. 2000.
- _____. *Shin Bin Shwe-gu-gyi Myet-swa-paya* [Ta Mok Ancient City]. Ko Naing Min Oo: Shwe-gu-gyi Monastery, 2010.
- Yin Myo Thu. The role of Narapatisithu with special reference to the selected stone inscriptions of Bagan period. Thesis (PhD), University of Yangon: Department of Archaeology, 2011.