

UPPER
MYANMAR
PANORAMA
MANDALAY
PYIN OO LWIN
SAGAING
MONYWA
MINGUN
MOGOK
SHWEBO
PLUS

DISCOVER MYSTIC MANDALAY AND ENVIRONS
IN CENTRAL MYANMAR



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Under the weeping ngu wa tree

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INTRODUCTION

Mandalay is the old citadel of Myanmar Kings of the Konbaung dynasty who ruled the country for the last time before the British annexation in 1885. It is the hub and heartland of Myanmar culture and communication. It still retains its old cultural traditions and is the centre of attractions for its historical heritage. It is well-known and famous for the presence of significant monasteries, pagodas, temples and religious edifices and also for the palace where the last two Myanmar Kings resided, King Mindon and King Thibaw.

There is a traditional Myanmar belief; those who pay a visit to the city of Mandalay will live long. The following folk song underpins the said belief:

“O Ye brethren
take refuge at the
foot of the Mandalay hill
enliven in the crystal clear
water of the Nanda lake
Ye be endowed with longevity,
happiness and prosperity.”

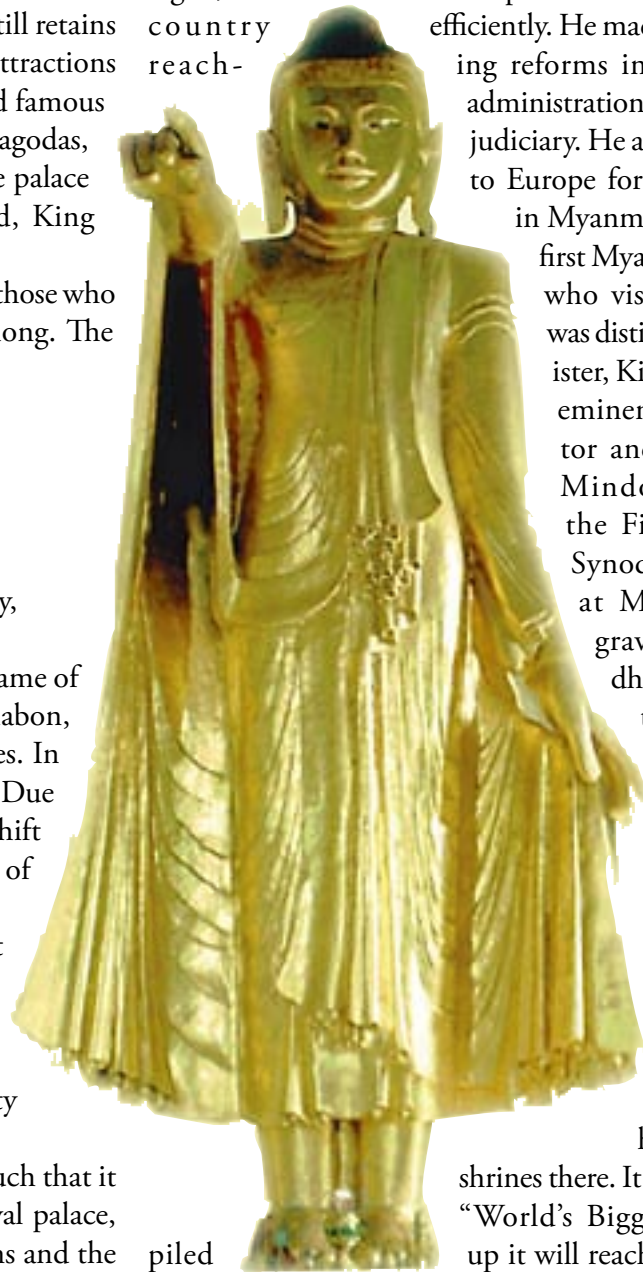
King Mindon propitiously gave the name of his newly founded city of Mandalay as Yadanabon, meaning, where all the prosperity accumulates. In short, it was known as “the City of Gems”. Due to population growth, the King intended to shift his capital from Amarapura to that of the site of Mandalay.

New foundations were laid about 1856-57, precise square and oblong blocks were planned. The city started flourishing in the year 1859. The King’s palace was built at the centre of the city covered by moats and city walls. It was almost square.

The panoramic view of Mandalay is such that it has pagoda-studded landscape, the grand royal palace, to the east is the blue ridge of Shan mountains and the ever-flowing life line of Myanmar, the Ayeyawaddy river on the west. It’s ambience is covered by such fabulous and notable towns like Amarapura, Sagaing and Monywa

famed for Myanmar arts and crafts and religious monuments.

King Mindon (1853-1878 also page 10) was upright, wise and compassionate. He ruled the country efficiently. He made vast and far-reaching reforms in the fields of administration, economy and judiciary. He also sent envoys to Europe for the first time in Myanmar history. The first Myanmar Minister who visited the West was distinguished Minister, Kinwun Mingyi, eminent administrator and jurist. King Mindon convened the Fifth Buddhist Synod (Sangayana) at Mandalay, engraving the Buddhist scriptures at the Kuthodaw Pagoda at the foot of the Mandalay hill. Buddhist Canon of Tipitaka Texts were inscribed on 729 marble slabs and housed in small shrines there. It constitutes the “World’s Biggest Book”. If piled up it will reach the height of storied high rise building.



King Thibaw (1878-1885 also page 10), the last king who ruled the country was inefficient, inexperienced and imprudent. During his reign, there were court intrigues and massacre of royal kinsmen. In the end, the country was finally annexed by the British in 1885.

Myanmar was devastated by the World War II and the British evacuation and the reoccupation. During the war, many significant buildings were either burnt down or heavily damaged. That included many constructions in Mandalay, including the King’s palace. However, the palace and many buildings were rebuilt on the original ground and old model.

It is accessible by air, rail and water. Now that, a new international airport is installed, Mandalay can be reached by air directly from abroad.

LEGEND

The emergence of the Mandalay city has an interesting and poignant legend behind it. Once the Gautama Buddha and his disciples happened to have a sojourn on the summit of the Mandalay hill. Buddha gave a sermon to the assemblage, including an ogress who was very much pleased with the teaching. The ogress wished to offer something to Buddha but unfortunately she had nothing to offer.

At that instance, the ogress decided to cut off her breasts and presented the same to Buddha. Thereupon, Buddha solaced her and made a prophesy that the ogress would be reborn as a Myanmar prince and when he ascended the throne, the King would found a new and flourishing city at the foot of the Mandalay hill, to be known as Yadanabon. Here, Buddhism will be promoted and perpetuated.

These prophesy turned out to be true as Mandalay was founded by the pious King Mindon who convened the Fifth Buddhist Synod (Council) in 1871.

MANDALAY PALACE

During ancient times, many palaces of wooden architecture were built from Patna to Peking, as far as Nineveh, both in India and Asia. Generally speaking, these palaces were pan-Asiatic, the prototypes, similar in plans and in its great lines.

Marco Polo, the renowned traveler, who happened to arrive at the palace of the great Kublai Khan (1260-1294), the first Emperor of the Mogul Dynasty in China, found his capital Khan Baliq (Beijing), founded in 1264, and his great palace corresponds almost exactly to that of Mandalay and Mindon's palace. Marco Polo gave a detailed account and description of Kublai Khan's city and palace.

Old capitals in Myanmar, both Lower and Upper, indicated the same general plan. The city of Bagan built in the 12th century also resembled the city of Mandalay. The same holds true of the most fortified cities in the Far East, for example, the fortified cities in Cambodia which are in general agreement with that of the Mandalay City.

Henry Yule gave a first-hand account that all the palaces in Thailand, Java and China and that of palaces of Asoka and Vikramadityas of India were of same character. These palaces belong to ancient pan-Asiatic fashion as the palace at Nineveh, which were of somewhat similar construction.

Ferguson, in his book, "History of Eastern Architecture, Vol. II, p.369, stated Solomon's House or the Forest of Lebanon is mere difference of detail, reproduced at Ava and Amarapura to which, Mandalay, of course be added".

memories of Myanmar's past and glory and its cultural heritage.

Mandalay palace city was precise in measurements, square in dimensions, surrounded on all fours, by thick and high brick walls with a moat. Its name was fittingly given as Mya Nan San Kyaw (The Incomparable Emerald Palace). It was constructed on plinth, 11 ft (3.3 m). It consists of 166 buildings on the platform, having the width of 500 ft (152 m) from east to west, and length of 100 ft (30.5 m) from north to south. The initial measurement is 32 ft on the eastern side and 114 ft on the western side.

The Earth Palace (Mye-Nan) is the Crown of the Palace Complex, with its seven-tiered pavilion roof, rising to 200 ft. (61 m.) There is the Great Audience Hall facing the Lion Throne. The hall has a wing in the east and to the left and right, that is to say, to the north and south. The central audience hall, in the middle.

The Royal Palace is of traditional Myanmar wooden architecture with highly-ornamented and gilded buildings and glass mosaic. Unfortunately, the original palace was razed to the ground by Allies bombing during World War II in 1944 but the exact and faithful rep-



However, though representations of the long and lengthy series of similar buildings had now disappeared from the face of Asia, Mandalay city and palace retained interesting and idyllic

lica of the palace buildings are rebuilt and restored in 1989 according to original design and plan.

Behind the Great Audience Hall is the Chamber of the