

**Book Review - "Five Thousand Temples and Pagodas on The Bank of Ayeyawady"**

**Author** : E. Mozhiko. (in Russian language) translated into Myanmar language by U KhinMaungSwe (M.U). (Former Lecturer, Mandalay University)

The book "Five Thousand Temples and Pagodas on The Bank of Ayeyawady" translated into Myanmar language is about the ancient Myanmar Empire or the "Kingdom of Bagan" (1044-1283 A.D). There are a few number of books on Bagan written in Myanmar language that try to introduce to the public all its social aspects, Buddhist institution and architecture of the temples and pagodas in a single volume. This book "Five

Thousand Temples and Pagodas on The Bank of Ayeyawady" is written in Russian language. It's author was a leading archaeologist of former USSR, (presently Russia) The Institute of People of Asia, Academy of Science. It was published by 'Nauka' Publishing. (The Central Edition of Oriental Literature) Moscow 1967 (The original size of the book is 6" by 10" with 200 pages. It comprises illustrative maps, photographs and sketch drawings.)

In this book the author attempts to make a brief historical account of the analysis of administration and power distribution within the Kingdom, the social stratification and the relationship between different classes and stratas inside the society. It gives a short account of the Buddhist institutions and assessments of the Bagan temples from the point of view of an architect.

I am not sure whether the author E. Mozhiko is still alive or not. I bought this book while I was studying at Leningrad (presently St. Petersburg) State University USSR in 1969. According to this book he

might have visited the KyetMaukTaung dam construction site where the Soviet engineering team was working at that time. The place is just a few miles from Bagan. The panoramic scenes of Bagan seemed to have lured the Russian archaeologist and given him inspiration to carry out research on Bagan and write this book "Five Thousand Temples and Pagodas on The Bank of Ayeyawady".

Throughout the book a scholarly report in Russian literary mood, sporadically mixing personal feelings with deep touches is shown. Sometimes he gives a narrative form highlighting the points that he wants to impress the readers. It never bored the reader with bare historical facts.

The following lines are some excerpts from the Introduction of the book by the author E.Mozhiko. It is his first impression and remark on Bagan.

... In travelling towards the ancient city of Bagan the dot size temples and pagodas begin to loom over the far horizon. They seemed to be floating on the flat plain and the arid land, amid the

cactus trees, and on grayish sandy ground. Through the foggy scene gradually the number of temples and pagodas increase more and more. At last, when the whole environ is surrounded by more temples and pagodas than previously thought, one might start to enjoy the splendid beauty and grandeur of Bagan. So many is the number of temples and pagodas it makes a viewer feel with amazing wonder.

... In coming close to these temples and pagodas one could be able to distinguish between their outlines, so much is the architectural types and designs of them it also moves the viewer with surprising wonder on the creative richness of Myanmar architects. Despite the uncountable numbers of them, in fact Bagan is a place of monumental buildings or a city of monuments.

... Time has washed away the parts of the houses and places built of bamboo and wood, also the paint of wall has faded away. Cement over here and there

have fallen apart. If we have to do an accurate comparison with what has been there once, we see only the skeleton of Bagan. Still the skeleton is quite amazingly excellent.

In The following pages the author stressed the importance of Bagan in the life of Myanmar people.

...Not only the peasant but also Myanmar all over the country pay great homage to Bagan. As time past by Bagan became a mythical city. Kings and heroes of Bagan were kept afresh in the memory of the Myanmar people. All these transform into fables and myth of Myanmar nation. Kyan-Sit-Thar and Aneruda (or Ar-Naw-Ra-Htar ) became legendry heroes of Myanmar, Just like Khaliff-Garon-Al-Rashid of Arabia who turned over history into folklores.

In the subsequent pages of Introduction, Mozhiko pointed out why the study of Bagan became important for the Myanmar people.

...Myanmar people during the long years of struggles against British colonialism cried out with slogans to revive the study of its own national culture, language and history. This is the reason why Myanmar revolutionaries mainly focus their interest on Bagan as symbol of power and might.

The author Mozhiko in confirming this point added some remarkable lines.

...For Myanmar, Bagan is not a city of extinct. Bagan in fact is a symbol of the sovereignty of Myanmar country.

...Bagan is the root of Myanmar fables, for archaeologist and artist painters it is a big text book. For each and every Myanmar it is a thing to take pride in. So the study of Bagan has shown to be the maturation of Myanmar culture and the sovereignty of the country.

In the last part of the introduction Mozhiko wrote

...The importance of Bagan is impossible to reassess with a second thought; the unforgettable scene of these

five thousand temples and pagodas on the bank of Ayeyawady River demonstrate themselves as a "Wonder of the World" that invoke true respect on creativeness of Myanmar architects of Bagan.

Why the author Mozhiko wrote this book "Five Thousand Temples and Pagodas on The Bank of Ayeyawady" is also confessed here as -

... There are few numbers of specific articles that rendered spotlight explanation about the rise and existence of Bagan and there are prescribed school text books and papers on this topic. But there is not a single book which may discuss without reservation about its historical and political structure of Bagan or a book referring to the buildings of temples and pagodas.

In the last lines of introduction of the book, Mozhiko offers some sincere advice to fellow Myanmar archaeologists and researchers of Bagan.

...Many things about Bagan are

still left to be known. There are many stone-inscriptions left undiscovered and some of those found are still not studied. The archaeological explorations countrywide are still left to be seen. The research studies on social structure and culture is not adequate enough to give a complete picture of Bagan era. So, sometimes we forcefully have to make speculations about certain things. But while everything is intact in places we shouldn't wait for any reason, we have to fill up all the unknown gaps by systematic archaeological investigations.

The book "Five Thousand Temples and Pagodas on The Bank of Ayeyawaddy" consists of six chapters. First three chapters are devoted to the historical aspects and in the next two chapters the author Mozhiko tries to give a vivid picture of socio-political and religious institutions existing within the Bagan Kingdom. The last chapter seems to be the area of his specialization. In which he presents an insightful classification of Bagan

temples, at the same time the evolution of the designs of the temples. He paid much credit to the uniqueness and specificity of the Bagan architecture.

We see how Mozhiko has organized his book to be a comprehensively readable and educating in the appreciation of the study of ancient culture and architectures. The brief outline of this book gives us complete overview of Mozhiko's Bagan.