

The Coexistence of Orthogenetic and Heterogenetic City Cultures at Ancient Mrauk-U¹

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The very purpose of this paper is to investigate the type of ancient city cultures classified by Redfield and Singer² to which Mrauk-U belonged. They suggested that ancient cities should be categorized into two types: orthogenetic and heterogenetic. I like to challenge two prominent theories for Southeast Asian urbanism: the first is Paul Wheatley's theory³ that Southeast Asians would not have evolved an urban life style without external influence and the second, the theory of Wicks and Reid which stated that Islamization constituted a causal factor in the transition to new economic structures³. Based on the three criteria for analysis of the ancient city, I explored the factors of these cultures and examined whether or not two theories stated above are valid with respect to the case study of the old Rakhine capital, Mrauk-U. My work mainly depends on comparative study: the Rakhine traditional chronicles, the archaeological finds, and the contemporary European accounts of the 16th and 17th centuries.

John N. Miksic explained in brief in his research that Redfield and Singer suggested ancient cities should be categorized into two types: orthogenetic and heterogenetic. The architecture in the orthogenetic city is more monumental for political or religious functions than in the heterogenetic city. The economic activities of the orthogenetic cities are redistributive and the authorities control most of the crops through taxation and tribute; this can be found where a surplus of staple crops food such as rice can be produced and stored in the city and distributed to the public in accordance with a centrally planned system.

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In contrast, the heterogenetic city is less monumental than the orthogenetic. Manufacturing evidence is characteristic of that type. The driving force is the market based economy where population is dense and the ways of production are varied.⁴

Geographic Setting

U Pho Latt, former Director of Archaeological Department of Myanmar, argued that two cities by the name of Myo Haung had been royal seats: Old Mrauk-U in Rakhine and Amarapura, the old city in Mandalay. In accordance with the Rakhine chronicles, the real site of Myo Haung is the second Mrauk-U established by Thirithuriya Sandhamaha Dhammayazar in 1430. The first Mrauk-U was founded by King Saw Mon 1430⁵. His argument has some evidence in its favour, but the royal title and year are found to be based on *The History of Arakan* by U Aung Tha Oo.

Geographically, Mrauk-U is situated between north latitude 20° 25' and east longitude 93° 11' and at the watershed between the Kalendan and Lemyo rivers. It is 45 miles away from Kalendan River and Wut Tar So mountain which ranges from the north to south lower plain. Inside the city, there are numerous creeks namely Taneytaw and Aungtag which lead to the Lemyo river. Alezi Chaung is only creek which passes through Mrauk-U which served as the maritime trade gateway to the sea. The largest seagoing ships of old times could reach Mrauk-U through the numerous creeks despite its distance from the sea.⁶ The uniqueness of Mrauk-U in the Bay of Bengal is its accessibility via land and sea routes to both east and west.⁷

Daw Thin Gyi pointed out the striking feature from the geographical point of view that Mrauk-U is an exceptional case which is different from her two analyses : the Kalendan valley cities and Lemyo valley such as Danyawady and Vesali. Occupying a narrow valley in the hills between Lemyo and Kalendan rivers, it occupies the big gap between two rivers for navigation and exerts control over the rivers by means of streams and roads.⁸

Comparatively speaking with old Rakhine cities, Mrauk-U is the biggest in size. U Pho Latt measured the area of Mrauk-U as 7 miles long and 3 miles wide. The innermost part of city, the palace site is made up of three terraces. The lower terrace measures about 1700 feet from east to west and 1200 from north to south. The Middle terrace is about 1000 feet long by 800 feet while the uppermost is about 600 feet square. The area is 1.2 square miles. The highest terrace rises about fifty five feet above the lowest level.⁹

The geographic neighborhood of Mrauk-U favors the locals rather than the aliens. From the north, a tangle of hills and creeks which are considerably higher and rougher than hillocks within the city serve as natural barriers against invaders. The west was a plain intersected with innumerable deep creeks, across which no foot soldiers could have made progress. The south is blocked by stony hills as well. Any attack from Myanmar came from the east. Therefore the east side of the city was fortified, creating a maze-like chain of lakes and moats with high stone battlements calculated to baffle any enemy.¹⁰

Historical Setting

The historical background had a great influence on the strategic thinking of the founder of Mrauk-U, especially his selection of the city site. During the 40 year long war of Ava-Hanthawady, Longgret was vulnerable to any attack from both sides. Both of them, Min Khaung and Rajadrit replaced their princes. Nara Meikhla was the last king of the Lemyo period; his throne was based at Longgret in 1404 during the war of Ava-Hanthawaddy. At that time, the Governor of Dallet asked for military help from Ava and King Min Khaung and attacked Longgret in 1406. As a consequence, Nara Meikhla abandoned Longgret, went to the city of Bengal (Gaur) and took political refuge for twenty two years under the Sultan, Ahmed Shad.¹¹

The Sultan of Gaur welcomed him warmly but he could not help him to regain his throne. During his time as a refugee under the Gaur sultanate, Nara Meikhla showed his ability in the Sultanate war against the Moguls by managing the

Sultanate's battalions, demonstrating his military experience.¹² It helped Nara Meikhla to impress the Sultan. Finally, the Sultan rendered military help to Nara Meikhla to reconquer Longgret, and in 1430, he was able to regain his throne. Nevertheless, he seemed to feel insecure at Longgret because it was situated in the delta of the Lemyo river which was easy for Ava and Hanthawaddy to attack. This was the last throne overthrown by the Ava king. The late Longgret kings lost self-determination occasionally and were frequently colonized by them. As an experienced warrior, he knew the defense system of Longgret was vulnerable to any attack from the east as long as he remained there.¹³

The Strategic Thinking of Nara Meikhla

The first thing he did was to consult his Brahman advisory body about whether or not he should move his throne from Longgret. One of his ministers, Kawi Kyaw said to him, “ The prosperity and peace free from the enemies depends on the strict adherence to justice by the king. Although the kingdom has the seven places which dignifies the country and full 4 battalions of armed forces, the country will fall into poverty unless the king is not just. So, what Your Majesty had better do right now is that you should take Baiktheik or celebrate the coronation ceremony.”¹⁴

Nara Meikhla rejected his advice as having no foundation. Zananda Yaza advised him to move the royal capital from Longgret which had been devastated by Ava and Hanthawaddy kings.¹⁵ He sought the possible site for a new royal capital so that his succeeding generations would be secure and free from attack from external powers. At that time, the Rakhine delta was sandwiched between the Mogul threat from the west and that from Hanthawaddy and Ava on the east. The advantages of Mrauk-U's site were its good water transportation and supply to the public and the mountain range serving as a natural defensive wall. He chose the place where three mountain ranges meet namely Taung Nyo Mountain, Kokar Mountain and Taung Kala. He had Taung Nyo cleared and leveled for his royal palace. He assumed Min Saw Mon as his

royal title. He set the border area of Taung Kala and Taung Kokar and 50 feet as the palace height. After constructing the palace, he carried on building the city in 1430. He ordered the construction of the royal town and 23 towns with a population of one thousand, 54 city gates, 4 lakes, 5 pagodas, and city and town creeks inside the city. He understood that manpower for the new royal city can be gained through popular belief in the supernatural.¹⁶ So, he propagated the extraordinary events found while he sought city area.¹⁷ Thus, he could mobilize public opinion to convince them that Mrauk-U was suitable for their aspiration of being prosperous and free from enemy. Min Saw Mon built his palace with the brick foundation. Before finishing it, he passed away in 1433 at a temporary palace.¹⁸

Min Kha Yee, the brother of Min Saw Mon who was also his successor agreed to follow the custom of taking a Muslim title, nominal vassalage and Muslim Sultanship as well as issuing coins bearing the Kalima in Persian script.¹⁹ Min Kha Yee carried on the unfinished work of Min Saw Mon. There were 12 successive kings from Min Saw Mon to Min Khaung whose son, the Governor of Thandwe (Sandoway) overthrew his father and seized the throne.²⁰ This period was defined as the early Mrauk-U period. Nearly all early kings attempted their best to colonize the Bengal region. Min Saw Mon sacrificed 12 Bengal regions in exchange for the Sultan's help the form of 1400 Bengali soldiers to regain Longgret. This shows that the establishment of Mrauk-U involved Islamic initiatives.

Evidences for the Orthogenetic City

The researcher applied some old chronicles combined with archaeological findings to analyse the nature of Mrauk-U through presenting three criteria, namely bureaucratic, religious and defensive perspectives.

The palace has three levels and walls. The foundation measures 1740 feet long and 1606 feet wide, with a height of 15 feet at least. The second level is 800 feet long, 1000 feet wide, and 50 feet high. The third level belongs to the king,

was rectangular in shape, and 50 feet high. The palace walls are constructed of sandstone blocks two or three feet long and six-foot long sandstone was used in the foundation. The thickness of the palace wall is four feet. The area of the palace was 1.2 square miles.²¹

According to old Rakhine chronicles, the royal palace²² was laid out as follows;
North

North Nan Pya That Hall	North Smoke Hall	Bel Taik Hall
Pwe Taw Hall	Shwe Nan Pya That HallNorth	Nivana Hall
South Smoke Hall	Hluttaw Hall	PaYeik Hall

South

This structure belongs to the first floor of the three-stored palace.

Name of Hall	Type of Throne	Function of King
Shwe Nan Pya That Hall	Lion Throne	Receiving the worship of public
Nivana Hall or Zay Ta Wun Hall	Han Tha Throne	Shrine, venue of tooth relic from Sri Lanka
PaYeik Hall	Kha Yew Thin Throne	Listening to Dhamma recited by monks
North Nan Pya That Hall	Bee Throne	Sleeping room
Bel Thaik Hall	Elephant Throne	Promoting the ranks of aristocracy
North Smoke Hall	Peacock Throne	Receiving foreign tributes
South Smoke Hall	Deer Throne	Discussing the interior affairs
Pwe Taw Hall	Padonma Lotus based Throne	Receiving the ministers and other kings
Hluttaw Hall	Lion based Throne	Convening with ministers

The houses of prince and princess were built two and half a mile away from the north of the palace and divided by mountain range. There was a wide road connected to the Bel Thaik, Hluttaw and houses of prince and princess.²³ There are 4 ministers who coordinated the internal affair with the king. They are classified by the researcher as following ranks ;

Name	Rank	Responsibilities
Pyi Soe Gyi	Prime Minister	On behalf of king, managing kingdom affairs, when the king is away, wining and dining the monks at the coronation ceremony
Sin Kel Gyi	Commander	Managing the system of white elephant, military elephants
Der Pein Gyi	Internal Minister	Reporting and discussing internal affairs to kings, doing the royal
Ko Yan Gyi	Chief of Justice affairs	Guarding king's security, discussing laws with king, settling disputes ²⁴

Outside the palace, there are seventeen surrounding towns which were defended with city walls. Between inner and outer walls are found dwellings of people who earned their living by cultivating, fishing and hunting as well as wood cutting. Moreover, thirteen granaries (Kyi) have been traced and identified. Consequently, there were eight paddy sale centers at and around Mrauk-U which have been traced by archaeologists.²⁵

There is a saying for the total number of pagodas in Mrauk-U that Thazin Pan Khine Ta Mying Mying, Rakhine Pha Yar Paung, means that that number is equivalent to 6353755 pagodas. Among them, the Shittaung Temple and Dukkan Thein are the most remarkable in Mrauk-U. Shittaung or Yan Aung Zay Ya was built in memory of a victory against the Portuguese Navy and the regaining of the 12 Bengal Iregions.²⁶ Mrauk-U kings built their legitimacy by building the Buddhist temples to prove they were devotees of Buddhism.

The defense system of Mrauk-U is superior in navy and moat, walls and fortification to Upper Myanmar kingdoms. So, Mrauk-U was not colonized by either the Moguls or the Burmese until Bodaw Phaya's conquest. According to Khin Maung Nyunt, most ancient cities in Myanmar have normally three kinds of moat Shunt Kyon, Nyun Kyon and Kyon Chauk. In Mrauk-U, two more types can be found: Kyon Shein and Kyon Pinlei. Between mountains and hills, big dams and reservoirs were built to store water as well as as floodwater

barriers (Kyon Pinlei). Furthermore, water gates and sluices were installed so systematically that water flow could be regulated to supply water for daily consumption and to expel it to repulse invaders. There are 28 Kyon Pinlei around city walls.²⁷

The palace was defended with three city walls and 18 palace enclosure walls. The city wall in a straight line measured two miles from east to west and from north to south and fifteen feet in width and over two hundred feet in height. Within the palace walls, were dwellings of queens, ministers, knights, counselors, monasteries, pagodas and other religious edifices.²⁸

The fortresses of Mrauk-U were built on the very steep slopes of mountain ranges in alignment with natural features. Within fortresses, there are flights of stone steps for warriors to come up with ease and speed. Moreover, there were warning system with bells to ring hidden in the mouths of big lions. At least eleven fortresses can still be traced.²⁹

The city walls which were crucial to the defense of Mrauk-U are divided into three kinds: palace walls, outer walls (city walls) and city border walls. The total length of wall is 19 miles.³⁰ Two types of gates served for public access of which 30 are found and gates for water access of which 32 are found. Twenty gates are located at the city walls and palace enclosure walls.³¹

Min Bin constructed more city walls, moats and sluices at Mrauk-U when he heard the news that Hanthawaddy's king, Tabin Shwe Htee, was preparing to expand his kingdom into an empire. He built temples such as Shittaung on the island Moe See and at the mouth of May Yu river and the single rock pagoda on Kyauk Pyu. Aye Chan claimed that all these pagodas were constructed for defensive purposes based on the observation that Shittaung is the best defense fortification, single rock is the best port and Moe See is best to resist a western attack.³² According to Magh Raider in Bengal, King Min Bin had a large naval fleet with modern cannon to protect the territory of 1000 miles. He had ten thousand war boats and the number of his cannon exceeded the sea waves.

The cannon can be seen at Mrauk-U Museum.³³ Min Bin resisted two attacks from Tabin Shwe Htee. Tabin Shwe Htee offered appeasement to Min Bin through the diplomatic channel by Maha Pinna Kyaw. This shows that the mid Mrauk-U period was the peak of the defensive system.

Mrauk-U's Feudal Economic System

Many delta areas have been created by the alluvial deposits of Nat, Ma Yu, Kalendan, and Lemyo rivers, the sizable plain near by the Bay of Bengal and the plain at the bottom of the Rakhine Roma. The life blood of Mrauk-U's economy is a feudal system based on agriculture. It was hereditary from old feudal economy. According to this system, the king enjoyed absolute power and was the owner of all the lands under his dominion. There is no doubt that the king possessed cultivated land and other economic resources. It provided the taxation for the royal finance, donation for monks and basic commodities for consumption. There are five kinds of agriculture: plain cultivation, valley cultivation, long-term crop cultivation, deposition cultivation, and tidal cultivation. The plain cultivation is critical; rice is the major crop. The cultivated land has been extended with habitable land since the early Mrauk-U kings. The king had people to work his royal land as well as their own land. The economic basis of Mrauk-U kings was land and people or labour.³⁴

Early kings reclaimed the land destroyed in late Longgret period. Min Bin reinforced the Mid Mrauk-U colonized land in Vesali and Lemyo. The ownership of land can be classified into religious land, royal land, land for public and land for spirits. The religious land came from the voluntary donations of kings and the people and was free from royal taxation. The more the religious land, the less taxation for royal finance. The king had his own servants to cultivate his royal land. Land for public use was for the middle class for their own consumption. The land for spirits was donated for powerful ones with the residence at their domain and free from taxation.

Emergence of the Rakhine Constitution or Shwe Pyin Dhamma That

For many years under Bengali kings, the Muslim religion threatened to dominate Mrauk-U's Sasana. Shin U Mya War, the statesman, pointed out this threat. *SRDJ* II, i 2011

suggested that they should create procedures to make kingdom, religion, and people peaceful, prosperous and strong. The people requested him to write it up. Chaired by the chief of monks, he drafted the laws of Shwe Pyine based on the Law of Manu which was then passed by the king and his ministers. It was approved by the people at a referendum.³⁵

According to Shwe Pyine law, Pyi Soe Gyi was responsible for giving orders to the Governors of Districts and clerks of township economy to collect data on numbers of farmers and area of rice fields. He asked them to investigate how large an area the farmers worked, how much rice they produced, and how much the expenditure was supposed to be. They reported this to Pyi Soe Gyi. He checked the results and lent money to the farmers without interest. The

and merchants. The religious income and donations were put into the religious fund.³⁶

The social life of Mrauk-U belongs to the village community system. The kings including Min Bin established one thousand community village systems surrounding the city and palace which are equivalent to towns. Due to Hanthawaddy and Ava attacks, the communities on the islands of Yan Bel and Man Aung were devastated. In 1433, under Min Saw Mon administration, he ordered that region to be rehabilitated by craftsmen and people loyal to Mrauk-U. The successors carried on this work³⁷. The census taken by Pyi Soe Gyi gives some estimates of population. According to one old chronicle, the population was recorded as 553,225 by Pan Myint Zu Kyine Kyine Mhine.³⁸ The Portuguese missionary, Sabastian Manrique, recorded that there were one hundred and six thousand inhabitants not including foreigners.³⁹

The Arrival of Europeans at Mrauk-U

The first European who set foot in Mrauk-U was Nicolo de Conti, the Italian, who made Rakhine well-known in Europe.⁴⁰ The second visitors were Portuguese who came with the ambition of monopolizing the Asian region. Their intention was to attack Mrauk-U. Their defeat was described as follows;

“Arakan is suitable for landing at its port and is full of wax, ivory and rice.....It would be successful if we attack Mrauk-U intensively. We prepared the guns, cannons, gun powder and marched from Goa [The Portuguese headquarters in Asia] to Mrauk-U to attack. The Arakanese defended with burning rafts from their coast and three of our ships were destroyed and one hundred soldiers on them lost their lives.”⁴¹

In 1517, the diplomatic group of ships headed by John de Silveira reached Chittagong. A Bengali told tales about Rakhine and men in Chittagong showed no sign of hospitality. They remained there for the season of winter, thanks to Silveria’s doubts, they went home to Goa although Min Bin invited them.⁴²

The Portuguese lived their lives either by doing whatever they were assigned or professional soldiers. Some became pirates. Some got involved in capturing Bengali people and selling them as slaves. Rakhine kings supported the Portuguese who captured people for the slave trade in Bengal dominated by the Mogul which protected the Mogul invasion. The Portuguese pirates served as the virtual buffer zone against the sea threat. The Portuguese pirates’ strength was so strong that the Moguls dared not invade Rakhine.⁴³

Min bin appointed some Portuguese as officers in Rakhine’s navy and as supervisors for construction of fortresses as well as royal and city guards. The Portuguese pirates contributed to economic profits of Rakhine kings. They had to present goods and slaves to the king. The Rakhine kings bought high-class professionals to serve in the palace and bought men of strength from the poor to serve in the rice fields. The number of slaves taken by the Portuguese was not less than 3400.⁴⁴

The first contact between the Dutch and Rakhine took place in 1608 when the Dutch headed by Pieter Willenez of Vernigde Oostindische Compagnie Company arrived to investigate trading possibilities in the Bay of Bengal. They arrived just after Min Bin had returned from an abortive expedition to lower Myanmar against Philip de Brito. He seemed determined to find new allies in

his battle with the Portuguese. Min Bin was well aware of the Dutch success in their battles with the Portuguese.⁴⁵ In his report, Min Bin was more interested in military assistance than opening trade.

The External Trade of Mrauk-U

Hindu and Arab merchants monopolized eastern trade before the Portuguese set foot in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. After handing these activities over to the Portuguese, pepper trade was the most profitable trade for them. When the Dutch joined the battle in the seventeenth century, they became the rival of the Portuguese. The seventeenth century saw trade done mostly by the Dutch.⁴⁶

He The fifteenth century trade between India and Southeast Asia depended on the sea route mainly and Chittagong became the center point. By successfully controlling Chittagong, the profit earned led to great regional authority from Min Bin to Sundra Thudhamma.⁴⁷ Michael Charney claimed that Rakhine's population base was comparatively lower than that of Upper Myanmar and rice production could not be increased without inputs of manpower.⁴⁸

The major articles the Dutch bought from Rakhine are rice and slaves. Rice was the royal monopoly. The revenue census by the kings gathered data on the cultivation area, the amount of production, population and domestic consumption. There were storage areas for future consumption in case of natural disaster and domestic riots. The surplus amount was allowed to be sold to the Dutch. The rice prices were fixed by Pyi Soe Gyi at the king's order based on the collective decision of District Governors based on regional rice market information provided by Hindu merchants and Rakhine diplomatic channels.⁴⁹ Rice was measured by the *Last* or *Carra* and sometimes both. The *Last* works out at 3270 lbs. The *Carra* varied in weight from 420 to 440 lbs.⁵⁰

It is important to note that to set the rice price effectively, the international rice market price was crucial. The Rakhine kings had royal agents or informants. They were Hindu, Mohammedan and Armenian merchants, rivals of the Dutch. They could reach Southeast Asia and Indian port cities and knew the current

price. They were not reluctant to report to the Rakhine king in return for royal privileges. Occasionally, the Rakhine king sent diplomatic missions to Batavia and Coriander to investigate market and political situations.⁵¹

In the rice trade, the king's influence was very apparent. Pyi Soe Gyi was the authorized minister for the rice exporting management. The increasing capture of slaves by the Portuguese contributed to more production of rice. So, the Dutch could buy cheap price. But, the king monopolized it to prevent the free purchase by the Dutch.⁵²

The artists, professionals and nobles, the beauties were bought by the Rakhine kings at the price of 45 to 48. The strong men ranged from 5 to 10. The Dutch were allowed to buy the slaves with low ability. The slaves bought by the Dutch had to be checked by royal officials to determine whether they were skillful. When they found professionals, they took them in exchange for money.⁵³ They controlled the professional migration overseas. In 1641, King Narapati Gyi ordered the imposition of a tax of one and half coins on each slave exported overseas. This led to increasing royal finance and controlling unlimited migration. The Dutch vessels brought from 160 to 350 slaves to Batavia.⁵⁴

Rakhine's imports were textiles from India, perfume, pepper and Para Say. The other commodities bought by the Dutch ranged from lac to indigo, elephant, ivory and beeswax. Lac was one of the royal monopolized items.⁵⁵ Elephant export was popular in that period. The price for an elephant was 1300 silver coins.⁵⁶ Cowries were in constant demand as currency. Occasionally, the Dutch sent ships especially to the Maldives to collect them.⁵⁷ In addition to cowries, the Rakhine kings used their own coins with their royal title. The coins of Mrauk-U bore religious symbols as well as the royal titles of the king, serving as the medium of exchange.⁵⁸ In 1652, when Sandah Thudhamma king became of Mrauk-U, the Dutch Governor of the Coromandel Factories requested free trade for some commodities except rice which had been allowed freely on the temporary status. In 1660, thanks to increase in rice production, the king allowed rice for free trade, as a result, the price fell sharply. Therefore, the king monopolized rice trade again.⁵⁹

Meanwhile, the Mughal Nawab (Governor) of Bengal ordered the Dutch to abandon Mrauk-U or lose their trade in Bengal, as the Rakhine supported slave-raids in Lower Bengal were destroying the population base of Lower Bengal. The Moguls thus forced the Dutch to choose between the security of their Coromandel coast factories and their trade with Rakhine, and the Dutch chose the first option.⁶⁰ Royal commercial revenue was worsened by the loss of the control over the entrepot of Chittagong to the Mughals in 1664 and the decline of Dutch trade from the 1660s. This had a great impact on declining royal cash revenues.⁶¹ The late Mrauk-U period lasted 146 years and 28 kings. Sanda Thudama(1652-1674). Okkabala(1674-1761), Sanda Wizaya(1710-1731) and Nara Abaya(1742-1762) fairly stabilized the kingdom. Some reigned for weeks and months. The political disintegration led to economic decline from prosperous mid-Mrauk-U era.⁶² The glorious strength of the kingdom collapsed when the Prince of Bodow Phaya attacked Mrauk-U with the help of Mrauk-U people in Myanmar year 1146.

Conclusion

I have done critical analysis to prove the coexistence of orthogenetic and heterogenetic city cultures of ancient Mrauk-U. The strategic aim of establishing new Mrauk-U by King Saw Mon showed undoubtedly that he was intended to build a highly capable city of defense at Mrauk-U. He and his successors built the kingdom to be more better defensible and reclaimed land for cultivation and rehabilitated waste lands. The moat, fortification and walls of Mruak-U are recognized by Khin Maung Nyunt as the most best defensive city constructions and praised for their water management system for dual purposes: defense and water supply to public use and agriculture. As Bob Hudson has written,

“Wars are irregular occurrences, while agriculture is constant.....The original construction of the earth banks should be seen as a creative approach to a different problem of water management that helped bring to Mrauk-U the prosperity that made it attractive over the years of adventurers from both inside and outside the society.”⁶³

The most elaborately crafted pagodas and temples are abundantly found at Mrauk-U. Shittang and Ko Taung temples are the most striking religious symbols. The perfect status of orthogenetic city came into existence under Min Bin's administration. Research has yielded strong evidence for that. When Tabin Shwe Htee attempted to attack Mrauk-U two times, he was not successful. His soldiers lost their lives when passing the moats. The military capability of Tabin Shwe Htee was high in his time.

Furthermore, heterogenetic culture is found at Mrauk-U with the evidence of some connection to Bengali kings. Cowries and coins were used as media of exchange. The Dutch opened factories three times at Mrauk-U. The perfect heterogenetic stage can be seen when Sandha Thuriya allowed free trade. Shouter, the Dutch trader's account proves it as Mrauk-U in the sixteenth century could be comparable to size and richness of London and Amsterdam and the richest city among ports of Asia called "The Golden City" by Europeans.⁶⁴

The two theories discussed in the introduction are related to Southeast Asian urbanism. The former is the generalized one and the latter, the specific. My answer to these questions is based on comparative analysis of Rakhine's relationship with Bengal in the early years of establishment. U Pho Latt claimed that Thirithuriya Sandhamaha Dhammayazar had an Islamic title which shows the cordial relations between Rakhine and Bengal.⁶⁵ But, Aye Chan asserted that this custom was based on showing the equivalent quality of Mogul kings to preserve the loyalty of Islamists in regions dominated by Rakhine kings.⁶⁶ Rakhine's earlier history before Mrauk-U experienced Muslim trade connections. King Saw Mon knew it. To exchange the Muslim court of Bengali's support in establishing Mrauk-U control. King Saw Mon and his successors accepted nominal Muslim vassalage and the trappings of Muslim sultanhip.⁶⁷ The old Rakhine historians, U Sandhamala, U Pinnita, and M.S Collis agreed with that argument. The nationalist state collapsed from the result of decreasing royal income produced by the Dutch withdrawal of trade. Myint Thein argued that it led to the worse economic situation and loss of rice market caused more instability and political disintegration of the Mrauk-U kingdom.⁶⁸

The development of Mrauk-U urbanism seemed to be dominated both in establishment period with the help from Sultan military and in reform activities at Min Bar Gyi era with the help of the Portuguese idea of building the city defense system. Moreover, the relations with not only the regional Bengali sultans but the early Western colonial powers seemed to dominate the survival city state of Mrauk-U. Nevertheless, in reality, King Saw Mon took the sultan help to regain his territory but he could establish the city and mobilize popular effort to build the city and strength without the help of sultan. Min Bar Gyi used the idea of the Portuguese idea but it is different that most of Southeast Asian old cities evolved with the process of which the external powers invaded and changed the system of administration and their alien cultures into their wish. Therefore, Wheatley's theory of Southeast Asia urbanism is found to be not valid in the case of old Mrauk-U because there is no strong evidence of showing external influence. Wick's theory of Islamization is not also valid because the Mrauk-U did not experienced the direct interference in Mrauk-U city affairs. Mrauk-U becomes the special case to falsify the dominant theories of the great scholars. The striking feature of Mrauk-U city evolution is its mixed character, under which orthogenetic and heterogenetic cultures coexisted.

Aung Aung Hlaing

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